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Nick Carter Stories

THROUGH DARK WAYS
OR
NICK CARTER'S STRUGGLE WITH A WICKED WOMAN

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THROUGH DARK WAYS;

Or, NICK CARTER'S STRUGGLE WITH A WICKED WOMAN.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A STRANGE COMMISSION.

"Well, Chick, what's new?" asked Nick Carter cheerily, as he entered his study briskly, and tossed his grip on a chair.

"Nothing much, chief," replied his assistant, grasping the detective's hand heartily. "It is certainly good to have you back, though."

"And I am glad to get back," said Nick, smiling. "A week of Washington is enough to make any one long for home at this time of year."

"And there is some one else who will be mighty glad to hear that you have got back; or, perhaps that I should say that I am doubly glad that you are back on his account. He has been bothering me to death on the telephone for the last five days, day and night."

"Very flattering, I am sure, Chick," laughed Nick. "Who is this very persistent friend?"

"Franz Dannenhauer."

"Ah! So Franz is back from abroad, eh?"

"Yes. He arrived the day after you left for Washington."

"And what does he want?"

"I don't know. He refuses to tell me anything. Simply says that he must see you at the earliest possible moment, and that I cannot help him in any way. It is quite evident that he is in some sort of trouble. You could tell by his voice over the phone that he is all worked up over something; and Dannenhauer is naturally phlegmatic, like most of his countrymen, you know."

"Yes, he is a strange combination of stolidity and excitability, and is likely to get stirred up over a matter of very little importance. I will call him up as soon as I get through my mail."

Nick had seated himself at his desk when he entered the room, and as he spoke was going through an accumulation of correspondence.

Chick threw himself into a chair to wait until his chief was through with his letters. Suddenly the telephone bell rang.

"I'll bet two to one that that is Dannenhauer," said Chick, as the detective lifted the receiver from the desk phone.

"Yes, this is Nick Carter," said the detective, in reply to a question from the other end of the wire. "Ah, it is you, Dannenhauer. . . . Yes, I just got home this morning. . . . Want to see me, eh? . . . Can't tell me over the phone? . . . Nothing serious, I hope. . . . Oh, well, I guess we can straighten it out, whatever it is. Don't worry. . . . Yes, I shall be in all the morning. . . . Coming down in the car. . . . All right I shall look for you, then, inside of a couple of hours if you are still keeping up your record as a speed-limit breaker. Don't get arrested on the way."

The detective hung up the receiver with a little laugh, but he turned to Chick with a sober face.

"He doesn't seem to be quite himself, does he?"

"No, chief. Franz is in some kind of trouble, or thinks he is, which is just as bad in his case. He's coming down in his car?"

"Yes."

The detective finished his last letter, and sat back thoughtfully in his chair.

"I wonder if that romantic marriage of Dannenhauer's is going to develop any more angles?" he said. "Well, it will take him an hour and a half to get here, and in the meantime I will catch a short nap. I have gone a bit short of sleep during the past week. Have Joseph call me when Franz arrives."

Nick had just returned from the national capital, where

he had been engaged on a special case for the government. He was thoroughly tired out, but quite willing to undertake any work that would help Franz Dannenhauer, to whom he had become very much attached.

The detective retired to his apartment, and, exercising his marvelous self-control, promptly dropped off into a sound sleep.

But Dannenhauer evidently had no intention of relinquishing any laurels that he might have as a speeder, for it seemed to Nick that he only managed to catch the proverbial forty winks when Chick called him, and said that Dannenhauer was waiting for him in the study.

When the detective entered the room the blond giant rose to meet him.

"Dannenhauer, I am glad to see you again," said Nick, as he grasped the big man's hand in both of his with unusual cordiality.

The detective did not fail to notice that his visitor's face, which was usually bright and almost boyish, was now marked by lines of care and worry.

"What can I do for you, Franz?" Nick continued, seating himself in his favorite chair at his desk.

"I don't know, Carter," replied Dannenhauer, brushing his hand across his forehead nervously.

"Well then, Franz," said Nick, smiling, "the best thing to do is to tell me all about it."

"That's just the trouble, Carter. I can't tell you all about it, for there doesn't seem to be anything to tell, and I feel like an all-round fool when I think of it seriously."

"Now we are arriving. What is this 'it' that makes you feel so foolish?"

"It's Mrs. Dannenhauer."

"Zora!"

"Yes. Now, isn't that foolish?"

Nick looked in surprise at his visitor, and for a moment permitted himself to wonder if the man was losing his senses. Then, after a moment's silence, he said:

"Franz, the last time I saw you—shortly before you went to Europe—there was no 'it' troubling you, was there?"

The big fellow shook his head mournfully.

"No," he replied.

"All right. Now begin at the time that we last met, and tell me what you have been doing. We shall work up to this 'it' in this way, perhaps."

"Well, Carter, as you know, I found it necessary to return to Europe shortly after my marriage to settle up some of my affairs there. As I was to make only a flying visit, Zora did not feel that she cared to accompany me, particularly as we had only just settled in our new home."

"By the way, Dannenhauer," interrupted Nick, "it was the old Dunstan place at Rye that you rented, was it not?"

"Yes."

"Go on. You were called abroad, and Zora remained at home."

"My business detained me a few days longer than I had expected, and I did not reach New York again until about a week ago. My car met me at the pier, but I was surprised and disappointed when I discovered that Zora had not come with it to meet me."

"You had notified her of your coming?"

"Certainly, Carter. I tell you the car was there for me, but the chauffeur told me that Mrs. Dannenhauer had sent word that she was indisposed."

"Well, there was nothing strange in that."

"No; but I knew that, unless Zora had greatly changed during our short separation, it would have taken more than a slight indisposition to have kept her from meeting me at the pier, and that, of course, worried me. I had the chauffeur burn up the road between the pier and Rye, but when I arrived I met with another surprise. Zora was unable to leave her room, the servant told me. I started up the stairs, my anxiety rapidly increasing, when the maid stopped me, and told me that Mrs. Dannenhauer was occupying the room over the library, as ours was not quiet enough while she was suffering from the neuralgia."

As Dannenhauer paused for a minute, and dropped his face into his hands, Nick said, with a light laugh:

"Well, Franz, I don't see that you have reached the 'it' yet."

Dannenhauer raised his face from his hands, and Nick could see that he was even more haggard than before.

"No," he said slowly, "you can't see it, and perhaps you may not be able to at all—but it is there—it is there!"

"Well, and then what?"

Nick's tone was a little sharp. He was somewhat out of patience with Dannenhauer's inexplicable mood.

"I don't wonder you feel annoyed, Carter," said Dannenhauer, noticing the detective's change of tone. "I told you I was a fool."

"Well, go on, Franz, if there is any more to tell," said Nick, in a little more kindly voice. "I admit that so far the chances are greatly in favor of the foolish house for yours."

"Wait! I wish to God that I could make you feel things! Then you would understand. I turned from the room which we had occupied together, and entered the room over the library, which is in another wing of the house. It was almost dark as night in there. Green curtains had been drawn over the windows, as well as heavy hangings, and it was almost impossible to distinguish small objects in the room. In a large armchair sat Zora. She rose to meet me as soon as I had closed the door, and in another moment she was in my arms."

Once more Dannenhauer's face was buried in his hands, and a slight shudder ran through his big frame.

Nick was fast losing all patience.

"Dannenhauer," he said sharply, "you are getting morbid, man! What's the matter with you? I shall begin soon to think that a commission in lunacy is more what you need than any services that I can render you. Here you leave a young wife for a trip abroad. You return to find her suffering from an attack of neuralgia, in a darkened room, and you at once—for what reason I cannot conceive—begin to set up bugaboos, and make of yourself a fit subject for a lunatic asylum. One would think that you were suffering from one of those insane freaks of jealousy that sometimes attack foolish and morbid persons. Wasn't Zora's greeting warm enough for you? Did you suspect the sincerity of her embraces?"

Nick was rapidly growing bitterly sarcastic.

As the detective finished speaking Dannenhauer leaped to his feet.

"Ah! The sincerity!" he cried. "Her kisses—her lips—seemed to burn into my very soul! They were like the kisses of a Judas! Ah, Carter, Carter, I told you that you could not feel what I could! Her embraces filled me with utter repugnance! It seemed as if I must tear her arms from around my neck!"

Raising his clenched hands above his head in an agony of mental torment, Dannenhauer threw himself into a chair again.

Nick Carter was puzzled. For a time he had thought that Dannenhauer had been suffering from a strange freak of jealousy, although he was scarcely the kind of man that one would expect to harbor any such feelings. But now Nick was convinced that he was quite sincere, at least in his belief, that something was wrong with Zora.

"Well, Franz," he said finally, "is there anything more that disturbs you? I really do not see how I can be of any help to you in this matter. It is one for you and Zora to settle between yourselves. If you have any differences it is hardly fitting that I should be called in to arbitrate. I am not a lawyer, but a detective."

"Yes, yes, Carter, I understand how you regard the matter. I told you how it would be. I felt. It is all feeling! I can't tell you so that you will understand."

"How has Mrs. Dannenhauer acted since your first meeting?"

"Why, much the same. She will not leave her room, and refuses to let me call a doctor. She says the attack will pass off in a few days."

"And you now occupy separate apartments?"

"Yes. She has had all her belongings removed to the room over the library."

"Has she a maid to attend her?"

"No. She has always refused the services of a maid."

"And the room she now occupies, you say is above the library?"

"Yes, and in order to insure absolute quiet below her, she has had the library door boarded up."

"Ah!" Nick uttered the exclamation almost under his breath. "That would seem to be an almost unnecessary precaution, as there was no one to occupy the library during your absence."

"True, but she still insists that it shall be nailed up until she recovers from this nervous attack."

For several minutes Nick sat silently thinking, with his eyes steadfastly fixed on Dannenhauer. At last he said:

"Franz, I told you a moment ago that I did not see how I could aid you in this matter, which appealed to me as purely a family matter. I have changed my mind."

"Thank you, Carter," said Dannenhauer earnestly. "Will you tell me what changed your mind so suddenly?"

"No, Dannenhauer, not at present. I have a very open mind, old man, as all detectives should have."

Nick smiled slightly as he spoke, but at once his face resumed the stern expression that had marked it when Dannenhauer had finished his story.

"Now, I want you to follow my instructions absolutely, and without question. Return at once to your house, and wait for me."

"You will see Zora, then?" said Dannenhauer eagerly. "You know she was very fond of you, and if any one can get at the bottom of the mystery of her conduct, you can, Carter."

"No, I shall not see Zora—yet," said the detective positively. "What servants are there in the house?"

"There are a cook, two maids, and old Davis, the butler, who came with the house. That is to say, the old man was for years the butler in the Dunstan family, and when I rented the place he applied to me for his old position. He said he was lonely away from the place where he had lived so many years. I hired him, and he has proved a clever old chap, and seems very fond of both myself and Zora."

"Very good. Now, the servants' quarters are in the rear of the house, I presume."

"Yes."

"And after dinner I suppose they are practically at liberty—except the butler?"

"One maid remains on duty to answer Mrs. Dannenhauer's bell, and Davis, of course, until I dismiss him."

"Very good, Dannenhauer, I shall enter your house tonight without the formality of announcement, so don't mistake me for a burglar if you should happen to run across me," said Nick, with a smile.

"But, Carter," said Dannenhauer, his face expressing his amazement, "isn't this an unusual way for you to go about the matter?"

"It is my way, Franz, and it is my way or none," replied Nick, setting his lips in that straight line that showed that he was not to be shaken in his determination. "And, honestly, old man, I believe you need my help," he added, in a softer voice.

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERY OF THE DUNSTAN PLACE.

When Dannenhauer had gone, Nick sent for Chick, who had not been present at the interview.

"Chick," said the detective, when his assistant had comfortably settled his athletic form in an armchair, "the Dannenhauer romance has broken out again."

"So I judged, chief. Can't we dig up some romance vaccine, and innoculate Franz. He sure needs it. This is his third attack, I think."

"Yes, Chick. Now, will you refer to the Dannenhauer case in the files, and go over it for me? I would like to freshen up in some of its remarkable ramifications."

The detective leaned back in his chair, and closed his eyes, while Chick found the record that he sought, for all of Nick Carter's cases were carefully compiled and indexed, so that it was possible for him and his assistants to refresh their minds on the various points in the many intricate mysteries that the great detective had solved.

"Here it is," said Chick, as he placed one of the large volumes of records on the desk, and promptly turned to one that was indexed:

"Franz Dannenhauer—Murder."

"Good," said Nick, without opening his eyes, for it was his habit, when he wanted to concentrate, to compose every physical function, while his brain flashed moving pictures of every feature of the case he had under consideration.

"Do not read it verbatim, Chick," he said. "Just give me a brief outline of the main features."

Chick studied the record for a few minutes, and then gave the detective the following brief summary of the case:

"Man registered as Pedro Lopez slain in room at Hotel Mammoth. Body spirited away. Found by Nick Carter floating in the Sound. Detective arrests Princess Tanza, Prince Thamen, and Gasgar, his servant. History of crime and motive show principals of tragedy to have been natives of little-known country in interior of Yucatan. Only members of the royal house are permitted to leave the confines of the country. Princess Zora, while on visit

abroad, meets Franz Dannenhauer. They fall in love, and Zora, forsaking allegiance to her gods and her country, whose superstitions she has come to despise, marries him.

"Prince Thamen, who loves Zora, on hearing of her marriage, plots to kill Dannenhauer. Fate, however, interposes a strange complication. Dannenhauer has a poor cousin who is bitterly envious of Franz. On the night before Dannenhauer is to leave Germany for America—his bride having preceded him by a week in order to meet Thamen, and formally declare her intention of renouncing her country—his cousin drugs his wine, and sails in his place with the intention of impersonating him. The impersonation is so successful that he is slain, instead of his cousin, by Thamen.

"Thamen succeeds in making his escape, and gets away to South America, taking Zora with him, she believing that the man who was slain was her husband. Nick Carter, with the real Franz Dannenhauer, follows Thamen into the depths of his own mysterious country, brings him back a prisoner, and restores Zora to the arms of her husband.

"That seems to about bring our friends up to date," said Chick. "What part did Tanza play in this little drama?"

"Tanza was simply the tool of Thamen. She was in love with him, and, I have always thought, had some little scheme up her sleeve for the final undoing of her sister. Certainly romance, tragedy, and adventure were strangely tangled in the incidents that surrounded the marriage of Franz and Zora."

"Mrs. Dannenhauer and Tanza are twins, aren't they?"

"No. They resemble one another very closely, however, and might almost be mistaken for twins, except that Zora is a pure blond, while Tanza is a pronounced brunette."

"Oh, yes. I remember your golden-hair clew."

"Dunstan place! Dunstan place!" broke out Nick irrelevantly, rising and pacing the floor. "Wasn't there some mystery connected with that old house, Chick?"

"Got me, chief. I never heard of the place before."

Nick had now seated himself at his desk, and was hastily turning the leaves of the telephone directory. Finally he turned to the phone, which was at his elbow.

"Give me four-nine-R Westchester, please," he said.

In a few minutes he had the connection, and asked:

"Is this the real-estate office of S. E. Green?"

"Yes, sir. What can I do for you," came the reply.

"Is Mr. Green in?"

"This is Green talking."

"Good. This is Nick Carter, the detective. I want——"

"Nick Carter! What the devil do you want of me? I haven't robbed or killed any one!"

"I am simply seeking some information that you may be able to give me," replied Nick, smiling at the man's perturbation. "I want to find out what agent up your way has charge of the Dunstan place."

"Well, you've got him. I'm the man."

"You rented it to the Dannenhauers, then?"

"Yes. What about it?"

"Why, I have just had some strange stories that have been told about the place recalled to me. The place has been described as a sort of a house of mysteries. To be entirely frank with you, Mr. Green, the matter has a more serious side than I can explain over the phone. Do you know anything about these stories?"

"To be equally frank with you, Mr. Carter, I have heard the stories, in common with almost everybody else in the neighborhood, but I have always regarded them as the usual ghost yarns that sometimes build themselves up around old houses, starting from some circumstance, easily explainable at the time, but growing into a tale of mystery as the years roll on. You know the libraries of old houses are said to be the rooms most visited by nocturnal ramblers."

Nick could hear Green laughing heartily at the other end of the wire.

"Then these queer ghost stories are connected with the library particularly, eh?" asked the detective.

"Why, yes, as I remember them, they center around the library," said Green. "It was there that Dunstan is alleged to have performed his famous vanishing act. But seriously, Mr. Carter, I know absolutely nothing about any foundation for these yarns, and have never given them a minute's thought in connection with the place. I hope they are not going to drive out the Dannenhauers, and result in dragging an alleged haunted house into court. However, I may have another tenant ready, if anything of that sort should happen."

"How is that?" asked Nick quickly.

"Why, I had a caller a few days ago, who seemed to be greatly interested in the place and its history. She was inquiring about the old places on the Sound, and said she understood the Dunstan place was for rent."

Nick's fingers had tensed on the telephone receiver, when Green mentioned the woman.

"Can you describe your caller to me?" he asked. "I shall have to ask you to curb your natural curiosity, Green, as to my motives."

"To tell the truth, it is not an easy matter to describe the lady. She was closely veiled."

"Thank you, Mr. Green. I will make it my business to explain to you, personally, as soon as I can see you."

"If I can help you in any way to dispose of those old ghost stories, Mr. Carter, I sure will be glad. I had no idea they would ever pop up and butt into my business. Dig a good deep grave for the ghost, and I shall owe you a debt of gratitude. By the way, if you want to learn anything more about the alleged mysteries of the place, old Davis can probably tell you. He used to be butler for the Dunstans, and I believe the Dannenhauers hired him. The old chap, I believe, is the fountain head of the yarns. You have my best wishes for your success in your ghost hunt, Mr. Carter."

Green laughed as he hung up the receiver, but Nick's face was serious.

"Say, Nick," said Chick, "I, of course, have had the benefit of only one side of your interesting conversation, and what I did hear, I admit, has made me a bit curious. What is the dope about the Dunstan place?"

"The old house has always been surrounded with an atmosphere of mystery and strange stories were told of it, which I only vaguely recall. I know that since the death of Dunstan it has been impossible to sell the place, and not until the Dannenhauers hired it has it been rented. Probably the weird stories never came to Franz's ears, although he probably would not have been affected by them, anyway."

"Say, Nick, loosen up," said Chick, laughing. "What are these weird tales?"

"As I say, I am somewhat vague myself, but, as well as I can recall, the stories were to the effect that Dunstan would frequently disappear for days at a time, and no one could tell how or when he went, nor how he returned. The servants were willing to swear, and they were corroborated

by the old butler, who was closer in touch with his master than the others, that at times Dunstan would go to his library after dinner, and would not be seen again for days. When he would be again discovered he would be sitting in the library, calmly reading, as if he had been there all the days that he had been missing. How he went or how he came, no one knew. During his absence from the ken of the servants his bed was never disturbed, and it was apparent that, in some way, he had left the house."

"Regular Arabian Nights' tale," chuckled Chick. "Old Dunstan must have been a sort of Aladdin-and-his-wonderful-lamp chap. But, seriously, Nick, what's all the row about?"

The detective paid no attention to the laughing remarks of his assistant. He had risen now, and was pacing the floor.

"I wonder," he muttered to himself. "But, pshaw! That is impossible."

"What's impossible?" asked his assistant wonderingly.

"Nothing," replied Nick, rather sharply.

"Yes, that's what I have always heard," said Chick, grinning. He knew when Nick was in his present mood it was useless to question him.

"There is more in these strange actions of Zora than appears on the surface. I am convinced of that," continued the detective, still striding up and down the room. "More than Franz suspects, or than I can fathom—yet. Come, Chick. Like all well-regulated burglars we will take a look over that 'crib' we are to crack to-night!"

CHAPTER III.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF CHICK.

Nick Carter's powerful automobile sped along under the skillful guidance of Danny, his chauffeur, keeping within the limit by a small margin of safety. Once outside the city proper, however, Nick leaned forward and spoke to Danny, who at once "opened her up," and they were soon dashing through the suburbs without any regard to speed regulations.

Suddenly the detective's attention was attracted by the figure of a man who stood in the middle of the road at a slight bend. He was directly in the path of the speeding machine, and was jumping up and down and waving his arms frantically.

Danny saw the man, also, but believing him to be some local constable, waved for him to get out of the way.

But the man did not move, and continued his jumping-jack movements as the car bore down on him with undiminished speed.

"Slow up, Danny," said Nick. "The man must be crazy."

Danny quickly brought the car to a stop several yards around the bend in the road, the man having jumped nimbly to one side.

As the big car stopped, the frantic stranger hurriedly approached, still betraying great excitement. He was pale, and his manner indicated that he was prompted by some unusual motive in halting the car.

"Gee! That was a narrow squeak!" he gasped.

"What do you mean? Why have you stopped us?" Nick demanded, half angrily.

"Just to keep you from driving plumb to death," retorted the man, somewhat regaining his composure, and resenting Nick's tone; "and I am some sorry that I interfered with you, now!"

As the stranger spoke, he indicated a bridge which at this point in the road spanned a deep and rocky ravine, and the detective noticed for the first time that the car had come to a stop with the front wheel almost resting on the planking of the wooden structure.

Nick's keen eyes followed the man's gaze wonderingly.

"What's wrong?" he asked, in surprise, for he could see no possible obstruction.

"Climb out of your buzz wagon, and I will show you," growled the man.

Nick leaped out of the car, and followed the stranger, who made his way carefully along by the handrail. When almost in the middle of the bridge, he stopped and pointed to the roadway.

"See that?" he demanded.

The detective uttered a suppressed cry of amazement.

"The planking has been sawed!" continued the man.

"So I observe," said Nick quietly, stooping to inspect the evident saw cuts.

Each plank, except those nearest to the road on either side, had been sawed almost through.

"Some fiend has cut the planks so far through that the weight of the lightest vehicle would snap them," cried the man, his anger at the detective somewhat mollified.

"You are right, sir," said Nick, rising, and turning to the stranger. "Nothing could save the lives of the occupants of any vehicle that had been driven onto this planking. You undoubtedly saved the lives of all of us."

As Nick spoke he offered his hand to the man, and there was that in the tone of his voice that was far more expressive than the most voluble speech of gratitude.

"What do you make of it?" inquired the man. "Looks as though it was intended to put some one out of the way, doesn't it?"

"Hardly that, I think. You see, if it was done with murderous intent the perpetrator could have no surety that he would get the right person."

"How do you account for it, then?"

"I don't account for it. It might be the work of some one with a deranged mind," replied Nick, with a shrug of his shoulders, as if the solution of the matter was of little interest to him. "If I remember right, there was something in the newspapers this morning about the escape of an inmate of an insane asylum around here."

"By thunder, you are right!" cried the man, slapping his thigh. "I will notify the authorities at once. I congratulate you gentlemen on your lucky escape, whether the trap was set by a murderer or a maniac."

"For that we have to thank you, my friend," replied Nick, as the stranger turned away with a wave of his hand.

"Oh, that's all right. If you men will guard the bridge, I will notify the police, and have some one sent out here to have the road closed."

"Very well; but please ask the police to get busy, as we are in somewhat of a hurry. You stay here, Chick, and I will take the other side of the bridge."

As Nick spoke he began to make his way across the structure on the stringpiece.

Within half an hour several policemen arrived, and took charge of the damaged bridge. The automobile was turned around, and Nick climbed in. There was a few minutes of silence while the machine was making a detour, and then Chick said quietly:

"You do not believe that it was the work of a maniac, Nick?"

"Frankly, I do not. I believe that the trap was set for us."

"But why—who?"

Nick shook his head.

"I cannot answer that—yet," he replied.

They made the necessary detour, and, once more striking the main road, were soon in Rye.

"We will put up the car in the village," said Nick, "and do the rest of our work on foot. We shall attract less attention."

Nick left Danny to find a place to put up the automobile, and after making a few inquiries as to the location of the old Dunstan place, the detective and his assistant made their way to the shore.

The house, which was a large, square structure of the Colonial type, with a wide, pillared portico in front, set on a terrace, well back from the road, from which it was approached by an avenue shaded by old trees. To the rear, the grounds extended for a quarter of a mile back to the Sound. The entire estate was thickly wooded.

Nick studied the house and grounds from a distance, for about ten minutes, and then, turning to Chick, said:

"It looks easy to me, Chick. Come, we will go back to the village, get something to eat, and wait for the hour when graveyards yawn."

* * * * * * *

At midnight a full moon was sailing high in the heavens, but heavy wind-driven clouds obscured it now and then for a minute or two. During one of these periods of comparative darkness, the forms of two men silently slipped around the corner of the house, and up on the deeply shadowed veranda.

"Do you mind telling me why we are doing this little amateur burglar stunt, Nick, instead of ringing the front-door bell at a reasonable hour?" whispered Chick, as the detective began a hasty examination of the door and windows which opened on the veranda.

"Because I believe that otherwise we should meet with some obstacle. I cannot explain now, Chick, but you should have some idea of what we are up against, so to speak, after our experience on the road. However, I have nothing but suspicions, and a sort of intuition, to work on, and I may be all wrong."

"All right, chief. You know I am always ready to back your intuitions at any odds. Throw out the ball, and open the game."

Nick had turned from the windows as Chick spoke, and now took out his little picklock, an instrument of his own invention, and quietly inserted it in the lock of the door. Inside of a minute he had shot back the bolt, and silently pushed open the door. All was in darkness within, but a whisper from the gloom greeted them.

"That you, Carter?"

"So you are here, Dannenhauer," replied the detective. "I was afraid your curiosity might cause you to interfere with my plans. Does Zora know?"

"No, no," whispered Dannenhauer quickly, "but I could not rest—I could not sleep!"

"Perhaps it is just as well," said Nick quickly. "You may be of assistance to me. First show me to the library. No, no light, Dannenhauer," continued the detective quickly, as the German reached out to touch an illuminating button in the wall of the hall. "I have all the light we shall need."

"Come, then," said Dannenhauer, taking Nick by the arm.

They groped their way up a broad flight of stairs in the dark, and along a wide hallway. Then their guide, who had been feeling his way along by the wall, came to a stop.

"This is the library door," he said. "I told you that it had been boarded up."

Nick pressed the button of his pocket flash, and the hallway was illuminated by a dim light, the direct rays being turned on the boarded-up doorway of the library.

A quick glance showed the detective that the boards had been roughly nailed up, without any attempt to match them, the only object apparently being a desire to prevent entrance to the room.

With a miniature burglar's jimmy, which Nick had slipped into his pocket before leaving the house, the detective began at once to noiselessly remove the boards from the doorway. He worked rapidly and silently, and, with the aid of Chick, he soon had them all piled up at one side of the hallway. His picklock quickly threw back the bolt of the lock, and in another moment the three men stood in the library, and Nick closed the door softly behind them.

"Now, Dannenhauer, a light will be perfectly safe," whispered the detective, and Franz pressed a button close to the doorframe. In a moment the room was flooded with light.

The library was a large room, three sides of which were lined with bookcases built into the wall. They extended from the floor to a height of about six feet. Above, the room was paneled in age-stained oak. There were no books on the shelves, as Dannenhauer had brought none with him from abroad, and this fact gave the room a bare, untenanted appearance. But there was a large, flat library desk, well furnished with writing materials, and several comfortable chairs.

Nick seated himself in the chair at the desk, and for several minutes gave himself up to a careful inspection of the room.

"Now, Dannenhauer," he said finally, "I should like to see Davis, the butler. Can we reach him without disturbing the rest of the household?"

"Davis?" said Dannenhauer, in surprise. "What can Davis do? Why, yes. The butler has a room in the servants' quarters that can be reached without rousing any one else, if you think you need him."

"I do. Come. I will go with you. Wait for us here, Chick."

"Sure thing, chief," replied the assistant, with his ever-ready grin. "Perhaps I can dig up the secret of old Dunstan's vanishing act while you are gone."

"Secret? Dunstan's vanishing act?" repeated Dannenhauer, in amazement. "What's that mean, Mr. Carter?"

"Much or little, Franz," said Nick. "I don't know yet. Come, let us find Davis."

Dannenhauer, convinced that it was useless to question Nick further, led the way from the library, while Chick seated himself comfortably in an easy-chair.

They reached Davis' room without disturbing any one, and Dannenhauer aroused the old man, who was a light sleeper, with little trouble.

The butler, a man passed seventy, and weak both mentally and physically, was somewhat dazed by the intrusion

of Dannenhauer and Nick. The detective, however, with his usual tact, soon had him more at his ease.

"Davis," he said, "I am Nick Carter, and I want your help in helping your master."

"Not Nick Carter, the detective, sir?" asked the old man, his eyes opening in awe.

"Yes," replied Nick. "Now, I think you are fond of Mr. and Mrs. Dannenhauer, and appreciate your home here."

"Yes, sir, yes, sir," said the old butler quickly. "No other place has been like home to me since I first came here to live with Mr. Dunstan."

"So I thought, Davis. Now I want you to tell me all about the secret of the old library," said Nick quickly.

The detective could see the old man start, and a light of fear and wonder flashed into his faded eyes. Dannenhauer, too, looked at the detective in surprise.

"Secret of the old library!" repeated the butler. "What do you know about the secret of the library, sir?" he asked.

"Why, nothing, Davis," said Nick, smiling encouragingly. "It is because I know so little that I have come to one who knows it all."

"How do you know that I know anything about a secret?"

"Never mind that now, Davis," replied the detective, a little more sharply. "Get into your shirt and trousers, and come with us."

The old man looked at Dannenhauer anxiously.

"Are these your orders, sir?" he asked tremblingly.

"Yes, Davis," replied Dannenhauer kindly. "I want you to do whatever Mr. Carter asks you, and to answer all his questions that you can. You will be serving me in doing so."

The old man dressed himself tremblingly, and within a few minutes the three were making their way silently back to the library.

Nick, who was now in the lead, opened the door quietly, and started back with a smothered exclamation.

The room was in utter darkness!

"Quick! The light switch, Dannenhauer!" whispered Nick.

Dannenhauer found the switch, and pressed the button. As the light flashed on, the detective caught his breath with a sharp intake.

There was no one in the room!

Chick had disappeared!

CHAPTER IV.

THE MURDER OF DAVIS.

"Chick!" gasped Dannenhauer. "Where has he gone?"

Nick shook his head, but made no reply. His face was stern, and his lips set in a straight line. He pointed to chairs, and when Davis hesitated to sit, he said:

"Sit down, Davis. This is no time for ceremony. I need your services—the services of your mind. Take your time, but think well before you answer my questions. Do you recall the visit of any stranger to the house during the absence of your master in Europe?"

"Yes, yes!" replied the old man quickly and emphatically, while his eyes lighted up with excitement. "Yes, I remember well!"

"Man or woman?" asked Nick, somewhat surprised at the man's vehemence.

"Man, woman, or devil! I don't know which!"

The old man glanced around him nervously, as if he almost expected to find another presence in the room.

Dannenhauer started to his feet excitedly.

"Why have you not told me about this before, Davis?" he asked.

"Leave the man to me, please, Dannenhauer," said Nick quietly. "I am afraid that he may be easily disconcerted, mentally."

Then, turning to Davis, Nick said kindly:

"Describe the person who called, Davis."

"That is not easy, sir. The person who called was heavily veiled."

"Then it was a woman?"

"Well, yes, sir, I suppose she was a woman."

"Large or small?"

"About the size of Mrs. Dannenhauer, sir."

"You could not see her features?"

"No, sir, only her eyes. They seemed to gleam through the veil, and to burn into my head."

"All right. Now, Davis, tell us in your own way just what happened."

"The woman called and asked for Mrs. Dannenhauer. I asked her to step into the reception room, and I would see if Mrs. Dannenhauer could see her. She said she had no card, but to tell Mrs. Dannehauer that she would only detain her for a moment; that she had been referred to her by a real-estate agent. I went to Mrs. Dannenhauer's room with the message, but she said that she could not see the caller then, as she was dressing. I took this message back to the visitor, who asked me if I would show her to the library where she might write a note to Mrs. Dannenhauer. I saw no reason why I should not do so, and I brought her up here. She sat down at the desk and wrote a short note, which she asked me to take to Mrs. Dannenhauer, saying that she thought that Mrs. Dannenhauer would then see her."

"You took the note?"

"Yes, sir."

"And Mrs. Dannenhauer then consented to see the caller?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was her manner when she read the note?"

"She—she gave a great start, sir, and then she turned to me and said to tell the lady that she would see her in a few moments."

"And then, Davis?"

"Then, sir, I went back to my station in the hall, where I remain when I expect soon to be called upon to show a caller out."

"And you showed this caller out?"

"No, sir."

"Ah, I see. Mrs. Dannenhauer herself showed her out."

"No, sir."

"You mean that she was left to find her way out herself?"

"No, sir. She didn't go out!"

"What do you mean by that, Davis?" asked the detective sharply.

"From my station in the lower hall I can see the door of the library. After nearly an hour, Mrs. Dannenhauer came out, and went to her own apartment."

"And the caller remained in the library?"

"No, sir!"

"How do you know that, Davis?"

"Well, sir," said the old man, turning to Dannenhauer apologetically, "I became very nervous for some reason, and when the caller did not come out of the library I—I went up to see what was the matter."

Here the old man hesitated.

"Yes, Davis," said the detective quickly. "That was quite right. You went up, and what then?"

"I knocked on the library door, sir, but there was no answer. And then—and then I opened the door. There was no one in the room!"

Dannenhauer, who had been listening to the old man's story with unconcealed excitement, again sprang from his chair, but Nick motioned him back.

"Ah, Davis," said the detective laughingly, "I am afraid you fell asleep at the switch, and the caller made her way out without disturbing you."

"No, sir. Begging your pardon, sir, I did not fall asleep, and my eyes never left the library door from the time that Mrs. Dannenhauer left the room. And—and she could not have known of the secret passage! That is why I say that I do not know whether it was man, woman, or devil!"

"Secret passage!" gasped Dannenhauer. "What is all this mystery, Carter?"

"Wait!" said the detective, somewhat sharply. "We shall soon find out."

Then turning to the old man, who was greatly excited, he said quietly:

"Ah, yes, Davis. The secret passage! It seems to me that I have heard something about that."

"He, he!" chuckled the butler, forgetting his dignity and the presence of his employer. "Many people have heard many things. Ha, ha! But nobody knows—nobody knows! Nobody but me, nobody but me, for Mr. Dunstan is gone! Ha, ha! I helped to build it! I know—I know!"

Dannenhauer was almost breathless with excitement as he watched the now almost senile old man as he rubbed his bony hands together, and chuckled stupidly to himself.

Again Dannenhauer started to speak, but Nick silenced him.

"Leave him to me, Dannenhauer," said the detective. "It will be better; and recollect that I, too, have much at stake now."

Then turning again to the old man Nick said quietly:

"Yes, yes, you know, Davis. But the matter, I fear, goes back of my time."

"Goes back of your time, eh?" chuckled the old butler. "That's what comes of being an old man. You know so much more than the youngsters. Ha, ha! Much more than the youngsters!"

Davis sank back in his chair, and seemed to be dreaming of the past. His eyes were fixed on a section of the wall bookcase in front of him, and a gentle smile played around his mouth.

Nick silently motioned Dannenhauer to a chair back of the old man, and then he slipped behind Davis, and placed his hands lightly on his shoulders.

The detective was trying one of his psychological experiments. Dannenhauer watched Nick with a puzzled expression on his face, but he did not speak, nor offer in any way to interrupt the detective.

The old man still sat gazing blankly, the meaningless smile on his wrinkled face. Finally he began to mutter to himself. Nick leaned over that he might catch the scarcely formed words that fell from Davis' trembling lips.

"Yes, yes," he muttered. "We fooled 'em! We fooled 'em! Out into the night, and not a soul the wiser! Then for a lark! Ha, ha! Mr. Dunstan was a sly dog! A sly dog! And nobody knew! Nobody knew!"

The old man's voice trailed off into an indistinguishable whisper. His eyes closed and his head fell forward on his chest. He had dropped off to sleep!

Gently Nick shook him. His eyes opened again, and again they fell on the wall opposite him. Slowly his face again cracked into a senile smile, and he chuckled under his breath. Then his head would have fallen again on his breast had not Nick pressed his shoulders slightly. As he raised his head once more, the detective leaned down and whispered in his ear:

"Now!"

"Yes, yes! The secret stairs!"

The old man half rose in his chair, with an eager look in his eyes, and then fell back, the vacant smile creeping over his face again.

"No, no!" he muttered. "It was long ago! Long ago! I cannot remember! I cannot remember!"

"Try!"

Nick did not raise his tone, but there was a steely note of command in his voice, which seemed to penetrate even the old man's weak mind. He acted like a hypnotic subject. Slowly raising himself from his chair, he stood for a moment with his eyes fixed glaringly upon the opposite wall.

"Try! Try to remember!" said Nick, in the same tone, at the same time supporting the tottering man as he began slowly to move toward the wall.

Dannenhauer, who seemed to understand what Nick was endeavoring to do, leaned forward in his chair breathlessly, his eyes fixed on the two slowly moving men.

As they approached the wall, Davis' hands mechanically reached out in front of him, but in his eyes there was now no light of understanding. It was as if he were walking in his sleep.

Presently his fingers touched the glass-paneled door of the bookcase in front of him. For a moment they trembled there, and then his arms dropped to his sides, and he shook his head mournfully.

'It was so long ago!" he muttered. "So long ago that I cannot remember! I cannot remember!"

Shaking his head, the old man turned and tottered back to his chair. Nick did not try to dissuade him, and when he had once more settled back with his eyes fixed on the wall before him, the detective whispered to Dannenhauer:

"He is tired. Come; we will leave him to himself for a time."

Followed by Dannenhauer, the detective softly opened the library door, and stepped out into the hall, closing the door again behind them.

"Do you really expect to find a secret passage, Carter?" asked Dannenhauer, when they were once outside the room.

Without replying, Nick turned on his pocket flash.

"What room is that?" he asked, pointing to a door to the left of the library.

"A small den, or smoking room."

Nick opened the door and stepped in. Flashing his lamp quickly around the room, he made a rapid inspection

of the apartment, which was evidently intended, as Dannenhauer had said, for a smoking room.

"All right, Franz," he said. "Now I think we will go back to Davis. Possibly his wits have returned by now."

At the door of the library Nick paused to listen.

"Ah, Davis has been getting busy," he whispered, as a slight sound in the room was plainly heard by the two waiting men.

In another moment there followed the sound of a click.

Nick pushed open the door, and entered the room. His quick glance took in every detail in a moment.

Davis was sitting in the chair where they had left him, his head bowed on his breast.

"Asleep," half laughed Dannenhauer.

"Dead!" cried the detective, springing forward.

CHAPTER V.

THE SECRET PASSAGE.

"I would like to know what the chief has got in his mind," thought Chick, when he was left alone in the library. "He is holding back something, but that is because he is not quite sure of his ground. Now, what did that business on the bridge mean? Nick believes the trap was meant for us, and it undoubtedly was, but who set it, and what for? Somebody is afraid of the chief mixing into this business, and when you come to figure on that, what is the business, after all? Franz comes home from Europe, and finds his wife is suffering from neuralgia, and unable to meet him at the steamer. And then like a crazy Dutchman he begins to feel things, and comes running to Nick, and wants him to butt in—and the funny part of it is that Nick proceeds to butt."

Chick, who had settled down comfortably in an easy-chair, shook his head in a puzzled way.

"Boarding up this library is the only queer thing that I can see, but the chief has got something up his sleeve, sure enough. He would never interfere in anything that resembled only a simple family difference. I wonder what the dickens he wants with Davis?"

Click!

Chick started up in his chair. The sound had come from behind him. He swung around so that he faced the almost empty bookcase that lined the wall between the library and the den.

The sound had been but a slight one, like the lifting of a latch, and after a moment Chick was almost convinced that his ears had deceived him, or that the sound had come from outside the room.

Suddenly, however, he heard a whirring, as of revolving cogwheels!

The sound came from the section of the bookcase directly in front of him!

As Chick gazed in wonder, he heard a grinding sound, and presently he could see that the section of the bookcase was slowly swinging into the room, like a door!

Inch by inch, with little grinding jars, it opened until, with another click, it stopped, revealing a dark opening in the wall.

For a moment Chick hesitated, and then, in his precipitate way, he plunged into the darkness beyond the opening, without a thought of the consequences.

He was met with a splash of some pungent liquid that was dashed into his face. He was blinded, and gasped for breath, but before his sense of sight left him he glimpsed the form of a woman with blond hair smiling triumphantly in the semidarkness!

"Zora!" he gasped, in horror and amazement.

The next instant a pair of sinewy hands had clutched him by the throat, and, practically helpless, he was bound and gagged.

The woman sprang to the electric-light switch button, and the next instant the library was plunged in darkness. Then there was another click, and the panel of the bookcase swung back into place, and the library was tenantless!

When the closing panel had shut them out from the library, Chick could see by a dim light, that seemed to come from somewhere below, that they were in a narrow passage between the walls of the house. From a small landing on which they stood, a flight of steps descended.

When he found himself absolutely powerless, Chick's first thought was of Nick. He feared that he might be trapped in the same way.

"But then he is not such a thundering, blundering fool as I am," he consoled himself. "He would never run headlong into this dark hole, as I did, after all that clicking and grinding and whirring to warn me that there was danger.

"But Zora! What can it mean? It can't be that Nick suspected her, and that is what he has had up his sleeve? I wish I could get this confounded gag out of my mouth so that I could ask her a few pointed questions. Confound it, you can't trust these half-breeds, anyway! But what is her game? I wonder who the chap is that is acting as her chief thug?"

But Chick could find no answer to any of his thoughts. The man who acted as the woman's assistant kept well in the shadows behind Chick.

Chick knew that it would be but wasted exertion to struggle with his captors then. It would be far better to wait for a more promising opportunity to attempt to escape.

He therefore offered no resistance when the woman pushed him toward the steps and indicated, without speaking, that he was to descend.

"I wonder what the critters want me for?" he puzzled. "Thunder! I believe they think they have got Nick! Their little act was so rapid that I bet they didn't notice the difference!"

Despite his dangerous and unpleasant position, Chick chuckled behind his gag.

As they descended, he could see that the dim light came from a lantern at the foot of the steps, and when they reached it, Chick felt, judging by the number of steps, that they had reached a level below that of the cellar of the house.

Here the woman spoke for the first time. In a soft, sweet voice, and in a tongue that was strange to Chick, she said something to the man behind him, and before he could prevent it Chick was thrown to the ground and his feet bound.

Then, after another brief command, the couple began to ascend the stairs, taking the lantern with them.

"What a devil that woman is!" thought Chick. "Something has made a fine porridge of her brain! It looks as if future generations might have a chance to dig up a fine, grinning skeleton here! However, I am coppering that bet with Nick still above ground!"

Presently he heard the light footsteps of the man and woman come to a stop on the landing above.

"I wonder if they have discovered their mistake, and gone back after Nick?" thought Chick. "Anyway, they will not get him as easily as they did me."

Then he heard the whir and jar of the opening panel, a slight gurgle and a low gasp that made his blood run cold, the quick fluttering of a woman's garments, and then the grinding and click as the panel closed into place again. This was followed by light steps on the stairs, and again the woman leaned over him.

A bandage was quickly and deftly tied over his eyes, the bonds of his feet were released, and he was hurriedly forced along an underground passage. Presently his captors stopped, and he felt that he was being pushed and hauled through some opening overhead.

He could feel the fresh air in his face, and the ground under his feet, and Chick knew that he was outside of the house. He was hustled along, stumbling blindly, until finally he was lifted from his feet, and thrown like a bag of meal into the body of a wagon. Then followed a short drive and another stop. Now he could hear the sound of water rippling on the shore under a slight breeze.

Again he was roughly lifted and dragged from the wagon, and to his feet. He was hustled along to a small pier to which a catboat was tied up.

The skipper of the boat leaped out on the pier, but when he saw Chick, gagged and blindfolded, he started back.

"Say," he growled, "I didn't bargain for any such business as this. I guess we will call this job off, ma'am!"

"I think not," replied the woman softly, and as she spoke, the point of a pistol flashed in the face of the astounded skipper. "Please step aboard your boat again. There will be no trouble if you follow instructions."

The woman's glittering eyes and steady hand decided the skipper. Without a word he turned and climbed back aboard his boat.

Chick was unceremoniously dumped into the standing room, and at the point of the revolver the skipper was forced to cast off.

The woman directed the course, and finally, in the fitful moonlight, they picked up the shore of Long Island, at a point where, on a cliff, stood a large house.

"There is a small pier just below that house," said the woman. "You will land there."

Having come to the conclusion that it would not be wise to dispute her, the skipper ran the boat up to the pier, and the woman and her companion at once bundled Chick out of the boat.

Then the woman turned to the boatman.

"Here is money to pay you for your work and your silence," she said. "Your silence! Do you understand?"

The man took the money, and nodded. He was glad enough to be quit of the pair.

The woman waited until he had cast off, and headed across the Sound. Then, either because she feared the man would betray her, or having meditated the climax from the first, she suddenly raised her pistol, and, taking careful aim, fired!

CHAPTER VI.

ANOTHER DISAPPEARANCE.

As Nick Carter announced that the old butler was dead, he stepped quickly into the library, and pointed to a dark wet stain on the man's shirt and waistcoat.

"My God, Carter, what does this horrible thing mean?" gasped Dannenhauer.

The detective, who had been feeling of Davis' pulse, dropped the dead man's hand, and turned to Dannenhauer.

"We can only admit the obvious at present, Franz," he said sternly. "The facts are hard enough and serious enough to claim all my attention, without attempting any theories or explanations yet."

"And these facts begin with the disappearance of your assistant, and——"

"They begin farther back than that, Dannenhauer," interrupted Nick. "They begin with an attempt on my life, which was made while I was on my way out here from my home—a little affair of which I had not told you. Never mind what the details are, now. We have no time for that, but it means that your visit to me was known to some one who fears my interference in your affairs. Some one knew of your visit to me. Some one knew that I had interested myself in the matter. Some one knew when we entered the library. Some one knew when Chick was left alone. Some one knew when Davis was brought to the library!

"Now, Dannenhauer, those are facts, for they are proven by the attempt on my life, the disappearance of Chick, and the murder of Davis. And while we have facts to work on we will put theories aside. Now, first, who knew of your intended visit to me?"

"Absolutely no one, Carter," replied Dannenhauer emphatically.

"You are sure that you did not mention it in any way to Zora—even suggest it?"

"No, no, Carter. I have told you that. God, man, you cannot for a moment think that——"

"Dannenhauer, I have told you that we shall not theorize so long as we have facts to deal with, and the immediate fact to be considered and explained is this:

"Some one entered this library on two occasions, after we had left it, and he, or she, did not come nor go by way of that door!"

"You believe in a secret passage?"

"There is no other possible explanation."

As he spoke, Nick walked quickly to the bookcase, in front of which the gruesome figure of old Davis was huddled.

"It is there somewhere," he muttered, as his eyes rested on the glazed door to which Davis had moved as if directed by an inspiration.

In Nick Carter's long and successful professional career he had had many experiences with hidden passages, secret drawers, concealed springs, and sliding panels, and, given the location of any such mysterious mechanism, the chances of his discovering the secret were greatly in his favor.

In the old man's condition of mind it was impossible to tell whether he had been influenced by mere chance in his movement toward the bookcase door, or whether by sudden recollection. Nick was inclined to accept it as a sudden return of intelligence, and that he was right was quickly apparent.

The detective studied the bookcase door for a moment in silence. Then his hand was placed quickly on the middle hinge of the door. His quick eye had told him that this hinge was not practical—that the part that was attached to the heavy framework was not a part of that which was screwed to the frame of the glass door. A

glance showed him that the corresponding hinges on the other doors were all practical hinges.

Nick pressed downward on the false hinge.

Immediately there followed a click!

The detective stepped back involuntarily. The click was soon followed by a whirring. Then came a grinding sound as the panel began to swing open into the room.

"What kind of a chamber of horrors is this place, Carter?" gasped Dannenhauer, who stood gaping, wide-eyed, at the now widening opening.

"I thought we should find something like this, Franz," said Nick quietly, as the door came to a stop with a click.

Unlike Chick, Nick did not rush into the dark opening that was disclosed by the swinging panel. He first threw the light of his flash into the darkness, disclosing a landing from which a flight of steps led downward into black space.

Then he cautiously stepped outside the room on the landing.

"This must work as well from the outside, Franz," he said. "I am going to close the panel. If I do not discover the secret of the spring on this side in five minutes, press on the middle hinge and let me out."

Nick then closed the panel, shutting himself out in the secret passage, which was scarcely more than a yard in width.

In less than a minute the panel again began to open, and Nick stepped back into the room.

"There is no secret about the door on the other side," said the detective. "It is simply a case of press a button. Those who could make their way as far as the other side of this door were supposed to know the secret. Now, we will see where it leads. Will you come with me, or wait for me here?"

"I will go, too, Carter. I want to know how far this devilishness goes," said Dannenhauer, whose Teutonic temper was now thoroughly aroused.

Both men then stepped into the passage and closed the panel behind them. Nick turned on his flash. In front of them the steps descended into darkness.

With his flash lighting the way, Nick began to cautiously descend, closely followed by Dannenhauer. When they had reached a level, which was evidently below the cellar of the house, the steps ended, and they could see that a narrow passage opened before them. This they followed slowly until they found themselves at the end of the passage, which opened out into a space as large as a small room. The sides were of masonry, and the roof, which was made of stone slabs, was scarcely six inches above their heads. In the middle was a stone, like a horseblock.

"Looks as if the opening was overhead, Franz," said the detective, mounting the stone, which caused him to crouch beneath the stone slab above.

Nick placed his hands against the stone over his head, and heaved with his shoulders. He was not surprised to have the slab yield. He raised it slowly until it fell back upon the ground above. Then, straightening up, he thrust his head and shoulders through the opening.

With his flash held above his head, he made a quick examination of the place into which the passage led. It apparently was a large stone summerhouse, built in colonial style, as was the house. There were stone seats on three sides, and on the other the entrance which looked out, seemingly, in the direction of the Sound.

Satisfied with his survey, Nick returned to the passage, leaving the opening above uncovered.

"Now, Dannenhauer," he said, "we have found the entrance to the library from the outside of the house. I am convinced, however, that there is still another means of secret communication, and that that is within the house itself. We will go back to the library."

Dannenhauer, utterly amazed at the revelation, followed Nick without a word.

When they were once more in the library, Nick turned to his companion gravely and said:

"Franz, you realize that there is no time to be lost in following this trail. I do not believe that any harm has come to Chick—yet. Davis, I believe, was the victim of his knowledge of the secret of this passage. But I cannot delay. I regret the necessity, but I must ask you to arouse Mrs. Dannenhauer. I realize that it is an unseemly hour, but there is no time to be wasted."

"But Zora? Of what use will it be to annoy and frighten her? She can know nothing that will help us."

"Still, I must insist, Dannenhauer. I believe you have confidence enough in me to know that I am not acting without reason."

"Right, Carter. I owe you too much to question your methods. Come!"

Dannenhauer at once led the way out of the library, and ascended to the floor above, followed by Nick.

At the door of the room that had of late been occupied by his wife, Dannenhauer stopped and tapped lightly on the panel.

"Zora!" he called softly. "Are you awake?"

There was no response. Nick, an anxious expression on his stern face, stood at one side, his flash light throwing a dim light through the hall.

Dannenhauer rapped again, this time loud enough to have awakened any sleeping person.

"Zora!" he called again, quite loudly. "It is I, Franz. Do not be alarmed."

Still there was no reply.

"Zora! Zora!" he called loudly, rapping with his knuckles loudly on the panel. He was now thoroughly alarmed.

"God, Carter, can anything have happened to her?"

"Stand one side, Dannenhauer," said Nick sharply. "This is no time for ceremony!"

Mechanically Dannenhauer moved away from the door, and in a moment Nick had put his shoulder to it.

There was the sound of splintering wood as the bolt of the lock was torn away, and the next moment the door was thrown open by the detective.

He flashed his lamp into every corner of the room.

It was vacant!

Dannenhauer uttered a sharp cry, and stood like a man in a daze, gazing around the empty room.

The bed had not been disturbed.

"Carter! Carter!" gasped Dannenhauer finally. "What does this mean?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEAD MAN IN THE BOAT.

"This is what I expected to find, Dannenhauer," replied the detective, after he had made another quick inspection of the room.

Dannenhauer looked at Nick in horror.

"You don't—you can't mean, Carter, that you believe that Zora is responsible for these outrages!" he gasped.

"This is no time for speculation, Dannenhauer," said the detective sharply. "I have told you that we are considering only facts—cold facts. We must follow where they lead. Come! Our task is growing."

The detective had thrown open a closet door while he was speaking, and he now pointed to the floor.

"See!" he said. "This is the way!"

Dannenhauer, peering over the detective's shoulder, saw that a trap, nearly as large as the center of the floor of the closet, was raised, showing a dark hole. Nick threw the light of his lamp down and disclosed a flight of steps descending to the black depths below.

With the detective in the lead, they slowly descended the stairs until, at what appeared to be about the level of the floor below, they were stopped by a blank wall.

Nick flashed his lamp over the obstruction, and discovered a small brass knob. There had been no attempt made to conceal it. Those who succeeded in penetrating thus far were supposed to be familiar with the secret of the passage.

The detective pressed on this knob, and the partition easily opened, like a door, on the landing of the stairway that led from the library to the underground passage.

Nick, who had carefully closed the trap above as they had descended, now stepped into the library again. Without a word he sat down at the desk on which there was a stand telephone. He lifted the receiver from the hook and placed it at his ear.

"This is Nick Carter, the detective," he said, as soon as he got a connection.

"Yes, Mr. Carter," came the reply from central.

"Please connect me—direct—with the official in charge at police headquarters at this hour. I mean your local police."

"Yes, sir."

In a comparatively short time a gruff voice called:

"Hello! Who's this?"

"This is Nick Carter; but I do not have to ask the same question of you. I would know that grouch if I heard it in Siberia."

"Hello, Nick! There is never any grouch with you, old chap. Where are you, and what can I do for you?"

"I want to get quick action, Flanagan. I am at the old Dunstan place."

"Oh, yes! Some Dutchman has rented it, I believe."

"Yes, a man named Dannenhauer. He is a friend of mine, Flanagan."

"All right, Nick. That goes; but I don't take back the Dutch, unless he changes his name."

"Well, now listen, Flanagan. I want you to do me another favor, that I hope some time to be able to repay."

"That's all right, Nick. The balance is still in your favor. What can I do for you?"

"Get out here to the Dunstan place as soon as you can."

"Get to the Dunstan place, now—at this hour?"

"Yes, without a minute's delay! It is serious, and important, and I cannot explain over the phone."

"All right, Nick, you're on. You always were a devil for mysteries, but I will go you blind, as usual. I'll be with you inside of half an hour."

"I will meet you in the grounds, Flanagan, so as not to disturb any one."

"Always on the strict Q. T., eh, Nick? All right. Look for me inside of half an hour."

Nick hung up the receiver, and turned to Dannenhauer.

"We shall have to leave poor Davis' body here for a time, Franz," he said. "Come, show me the shortest way—outside the house—to that stone summerhouse on the lawn."

Dannenhauer led the way down to the front door, and out on the grounds.

Dawn was now breaking, and they could see quite clearly without the aid of the detective's flash.

When they reached the summerhouse, Nick closed the stone slab over the entrance to the secret passage, and then began to examine the path that led from the small building to the main driveway.

Slowly he made his way to the entrance gate, through which he passed into the road.

"A wagon and one horse, and headed for the Sound," he said finally, as he straightened up and shook himself, much as a big dog does when it comes out of water. "Here the trail starts—and, thank Heaven, here's Flanagan!"

The policeman, a big, stalwart fellow, came hurriedly up the road, puffing from the haste he had made.

"All right, Flanagan, this way," called Nick, in a whisper.

The detective hurriedly introduced Dannenhauer and the policeman, and then said:

"Flanagan, I have no time to go into any details with you, but I shall probably need your help. Dannenhauer's butler has been murdered, Mrs. Dannenhauer is missing, as well as my assistant, Chick."

"Whew!" whistled Flanagan. "Thieves?"

"No. But I cannot go into the history of the crime now. The trail starts right here. Come!"

With his eyes flashing, and his lips set in a thin, straight line, Nick started down the road, followed by Dannenhauer and Flanagan.

The ground, moistened by the dew, held the marks of the wheels, and the horse's hoofs were quite well defined. For fifteen minutes Nick rapidly followed the trail. Then suddenly he stopped.

At this point the wagon wheels turned off across the sand in the direction of the shore of the Sound, where, in the distance, a small boathouse could be seen.

And tied to a stake near by was a horse, attached to a small grocery wagon!

"They have taken to the water," muttered Nick, "and a water trail is a mighty hard one to follow!"

The detective had paused for a moment. Now he started on across the sand at a double-quick step, followed by Dannenhauer, who kept close at his heels, his face pale and set, and marked with lines which horror and anxiety had set there.

At the boathouse, Nick found little to aid him. From the shore, a float extended about twenty-five feet out into the water. One or two rowboats were tied up to it, and at some distance from the shore a number of sailboats were lying at anchored buoys.

At this moment there was a call from up the shore. Turning quickly, Nick saw a stalwart young man approaching them at rapid strides over the sand.

"Hello!" he greeted, when he had come within a few feet. "Goin' fishin'? Want a boat?"

"Do you own this boathouse?" asked Nick quickly.

"Right."

"You rent boats?"

"Sure thing."

"Do you own all of these boats?"

"Not all of them."

"And those that you do not own?"

"They belong to the summer people."

"They rent anchorage and pier-landing privileges from you?"

"Yes."

"Are any boats missing this morning?"

The man started, and quickly swept the water with a sharp glance. Then he mentally counted the rowboats that were tied up to the float.

"None missing," he replied, after he had made his inventory, and turning to the detective with some curiosity and a touch of resentment in his manner. "Now, maybe you will tell me who you are and what you want?"

"I am Nick Carter, and I want straight, quick answers to my questions," said the detective, somewhat sternly.

"Thunder!" gasped the man. "Not *the* Nick Carter—not the detective?"

"Yes, I am the detective, Mr.——"

"Peters is my name, Mr. Carter, and I sure would feel honored if I might shake hands with you."

Nick took the man's hand, which he had held out hesitatingly, and shook it heartily.

The big fellow winced like a schoolboy, for Nick sometimes forgot his great strength, and his handclasp was like that of a vise.

"I don't wonder you have been called the 'little giant,' Mr. Carter," said Peters, nursing his hand. "You are the first man that ever made Sam Peters take water on a handgrip."

"Now, Peters," said Nick, with a slight smile, "I suppose it is not unusual for people who are sailing around here to put into this pier, now and then—I mean strangers who may be sailing up or down the Sound?"

"It happens quite frequently, Mr. Carter."

"Did any strange boat put in here yesterday?"

"Not a strange boat, sir, but one that does not anchor here."

"Ah! At what time was this, please?"

"It was just as I was leaving for the day. All my boats were in, and I was getting ready to go home."

"Now, Peters, go on in your own way, and tell me all about that boat and its occupants, and what they did."

The man was silent for a moment, as if arranging his facts. Then he said:

"I had just hauled up the rowboats when I noticed a catboat heading in for the float. Naturally, I waited, and in a few minutes more I made her out to be the *Flash*, of Portchester, old Pike Reed's boat, and Pike was sailing her. Presently I saw that he had a passenger. When the *Flash* swung up to the pier, I caught the painter, and made her fast.

"Then the man got out, and I had a chance to get a look at him. He was a queer-looking chap, almost like a dwarf, and he seemed to be an octoroon. When he had climbed out on the float, he asked Pike a few questions about the way to get to the village, and then started off toward Rye. I asked Pike who his passenger was, but he didn't know anything about him. He said he had hired him at Portchester to take him to Rye, saying that he might have a passenger and some baggage to carry back. Pike stayed by the boat, and the man headed for the village. I left Pike here, and that's all I know about it."

"Thank you, Peters. Now, I want you to take us to Portchester in one of your boats. I could sail the boat around myself, but there would be no way of getting it back to you, as I may not return by water. Can you do this without interfering with your business? I will not detain you at Portchester, after you have landed us."

"Very well, sir. Do you want to start at once?"

"Immediately. We have not a moment to lose."

Peters turned to one of the rowboats, and pushed it off into the water.

"Now, if you will climb in, gentlemen, I will put you aboard the *Witch* in a jiffy. She is my fastest boat, and she will land you in Portchester quicker than any horse and wagon could do it."

When they were well under way, Nick turned to Peters and asked:

"Does this man, Pike Reed, run a boathouse at Portchester?"

"No, sir. He has only one boat, the *Flash*. He takes out boating and fishing parties during the season."

"He has some headquarters, I suppose?"

"He is generally hanging around the big pier. If not, he can be found at his house, which is not far from the shore."

With a favoring wind, the *Witch* made good time to the pier at Portchester. Half a dozen men were busy on the shore with boats and fishing tackle.

"Can you tell me if Reed is among those men?" asked Nick.

"Yes," replied Peters. "Pike is not there, but any one of them can tell you where you can find him."

Nick, followed by Flanagan and Dannenhauer, the latter silent and anxious, leaped out onto the pier. The detective handed Peters a bill.

"Sorry, sir, but I haven't any change," said the boatman.

"I didn't ask you for any change, Peters," said Nick. "That is for you, and I want to add my thanks to it."

Nick rapidly approached the group of boatmen.

"Can you tell me where I can find Pike Reed?" the detective asked one of the men.

"That's Pike's hang-out," said the man, pointing to a small shack that stood back some distance from the shore. "But I don't think he is at home. He had a night job last night, and his boat isn't back."

"Thank you. I will try the house, anyway."

Nick started toward the cabin, when the man called:

"Hold on, mister! I think that is the *Flash* coming in now."

Nick turned and looked out over the Sound in the direction in which the man was pointing. He saw a catboat headed in for the shore.

"Yes, that's the *Flash*, all right," said the man, after another minute's scrutiny. "But, dang it all, it ain't Pike a-sailin' of her!"

The man turned abruptly, and hurried down to the pier, followed by the other boatmen, whose attention had been called to the incoming *Flash*.

"Come," said Nick, turning to Flanagan. "We must see what this means."

It was fully fifteen minutes before the catboat swung up to the pier, where a group of curious men awaited her.

"Where's Pike?" asked one, as he grabbed the bow of the *Flash*, when it gently bumped the pier.

The face of the man at the tiller was grim. He did not speak in reply to the question, but pointed down at his feet in the standing room.

"Stand back!"

It was Nick Carter who spoke, as he pushed his way through the men grouped around the bow of the boat. He had stood on the outskirts of the crowd, heard the question, and seen the, to him, significant motion in reply.

The crowd fell back at his sharp command, and he sprang on the bow of the *Flash*, quickly making his way aft to the standing room.

Lying against the doors of the little cuddy was the body of a man. There was a wound near the left temple.

"Is this Pike Reed?" asked the detective, although he felt that the question was unnecessary.

"It was Pike, but he's as dead as a kippered herring!" replied the grim man at the tiller.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRAILING A TIGRESS.

"How did this happen?" asked Nick sharply.

"How in thunder should I know how it happened? Who in thunder are you, mister, climbing aboard without so much as 'by your leave'? Take it from me, you better quit your fool questions, and send for the police."

"The police are here," said Nick quietly, "and take it from me, you will save yourself lots of trouble if you answer my questions promptly."

"Who in——"

"You are to answer questions, and not to ask them!" broke in Flanagan, who had climbed into the standing room. "I am Captain Flanagan, of Rye."

"Oh, all right, cap. Go ahead. I just didn't want this chap here, whoever he is, jumpin' on me with both feet. But what I know about the killing of Pike Reed won't do any one much good, I guess. I belong in Oyster Bay, and this morning I started out early, fishing. I sailed along down toward Whitestone, and just as it was getting daylight I saw the *Flash* heading up into the wind, and her sail slatting. Then she would fill away, and swung around into the wind again. After a minute I knew that something was wrong on board, and I headed for her.

"After a good bit of jockeying, I managed to get alongside, made my boat fast to her, and jumped on deck. As I came into the standing room, there was Pike, lying as he is now. I didn't touch him when I saw that he was out of the game. Then I anchored my boat, and put in here. That's all I know, but I want to say right now that the feller that did the job ought to be drawn and quartered, for a more harmless critter than Pike Reed never sailed a boat 'round these parts!"

"It was indeed a dastardly job," said Nick, as he dropped on his knees beside the body.

A brief examination quickly convinced Nick that the man had been dead for some time. Turning to Flanagan, he said:

"This is up to you, Flanagan, but remember, we must not be delayed. Quick action becomes more and more necessary."

The policeman took command of the situation with alacrity. Turning to the men on shore, he said:

"Men, Pike Reed has been murdered. Take his body ashore, and notify the police of Portchester at once! Tell them that Nick Carter and Police Captain Flanagan, of Rye, are after the murderers, and will report as soon as possible. Tell them that there is the body of another murdered man in the library of the old Dunstan place, at Rye, and that both murders are connected! Get that?"

The men were dazed for a moment by the ghastly announcement, but, recovering, they leaped aboard the boat, and promptly removed the body to the pier.

"All right, captain," said the one who seemed to have constituted himself as spokesman. "Here's hoping you get the man that killed poor Pike!"

"Now," said Nick, turning to the skipper of the *Flash*, "what's your name?"

"Bill Rogers, sir," replied the man, who by this time was quite willing to concede the detective's authority.

"Well, Rogers, cast off, and get back to the place where you anchored your boat. And don't let any seaweed grow under the keel, either."

Rogers responded promptly, and the *Flash* was soon headed across the Sound again.

"Judging by your knowledge of the wind and tide last night how far would the *Flash* have drifted in, say six hours, without a hand at the helm?" asked Nick.

"Well, sir, I have been figuring the thing out myself," said the fisherman, "and I should say that with the tide set against the wind, as it was last night, she would have mostly sailed around in circles. I don't believe she was more than a mile from the place where Pike was shot when I picked her up."

"Good!" said Nick. "And that mile—would it be up or down the Sound?"

"I should figure it down, sir."

"Then never mind your boat at present. Head for a point on the shore above where you picked up the *Flash*—for a point where, in your best judgment she might have drifted from."

"All right, sir."

Rogers changed the course of the *Flash* a little, and headed for a point nearer to Whitestone.

"You know the shore well, Rogers?" asked the detective, after a long silence. "I mean the shore itself—the houses and the people who occupy them."

"Born and brought up there, sir. I know pretty nearly every house on the north shore, and the names of them as owns 'em. Of course, a lot of 'em are summer places, and are not always occupied by the same people—rented for the season. But I know who owns 'em."

"Good! Now, what do you know about that place on the hill there, right ahead of us?"

"That's the old Johnson place, sir. It has been vacant for quite a number of years."

"It doesn't seem to be vacant just now, Rogers."

"Eh, what's that?"

"There is smoke coming out of the chimney."

"So there is. I hadn't noticed that. Must have been rented within a few days, then."

"About how near are we to the place from which you figure the *Flash* drifted?"

"Well, according to my reckoning, it must have been somewhere about off the Johnson place."

"Ah!"

As he uttered this ejaculation, Nick dived down into the small cabin.

"Now, what has he got on his mind?" growled Flanagan, as Nick disappeared. "Can't keep up with his think tank no way."

About ten minutes later Rogers uttered a sharp cry, and Flanagan, whose attention had been riveted on the shore, turned quickly. He saw a man poke his head out of the companionway, and grin at Rogers. He had fiery-red hair, bushy, red eyebrows, and a stubby red mustache.

"Who in thunder are you, and how did you get aboard?" roared Rogers, who for a moment seemed inclined to abandon the tiller and spring upon the intruder.

"Been aboard ever sence ye sailed," grinned the man, speaking with a nasal twang. "Didn't ye know I was here?"

"If I had, I'd have chucked you overboard! What do you want, anyway? First time I ever heard of a stowaway on a catboat."

"Nick Carter brought me along. Thought he might need me."

By this time the man had climbed into the standing room. He was clothed in oilskins from head to foot, and held a rough cap in his hand. Without any ceremony, he climbed on the deck house, and seated himself beside Flanagan and Dannenhauer.

"Well, I'm blowed!" gasped the policeman, jumping down from his perch. "Where's Nick?"

He peered into the cuddy, and then, straightening up, burst into a hearty laugh.

"It's all right, Rogers."

It was the voice of Nick Carter that spoke. Rogers' jaw dropped and his mouth opened in amazement.

"Say!" he gasped; "are you the same man that went down below a minute ago?"

"A little more than a minute, to be accurate, Rogers; but I am the same man."

"Well, I'm darned!"

In his excitement, Rogers had let the boat flutter up into the wind. He put her on her course again. They were now close inshore, and they could see a little pier at the foot of the hill.

"We will tie up there, Rogers," said Nick, and the man ran the boat easily up to the pier.

"Now," said the detective to Dannenhauer, "you remain here with Rogers, Franz. If my theory is right, you might complicate matters."

Then, turning to Rogers, Nick said:

"It may be only a short wait, and it may be a long one—but wait."

"Well, I'll be darned! I mean I will wait, sir."

Dannenhauer had scarcely spoken since they had left Rye. Pale and haggard, he had followed the detective around in utter silence. Now it seemed that he could no longer restrain himself.

"Carter, Carter!" he cried. "Horror has been piling upon horror! It seems as if I should go mad! Tell me—Zora? You—you don't believe that she could have done——"

"Franz," interrupted the detective gently, "I believe that Zora is innocent of any crime."

"But her strange actions—the changing of her room to the one that led by the secret passage to the library! Her singular attitude toward me! It is all so strange—so horrible!"

"Dannenhauer, it was not your wife! You have not seen Zora since you left her to sail for Europe!"

CHAPTER IX.

NICK TAKES TANZA'S TRICK.

Nick leaped out on the pier, followed by Flanagan, leaving Dannenhauer dazed and wondering over his inexplicable statement. As the detective began to mount the hill toward the house, Flanagan said:

"Well, what now?"

"I am going to that house. I believe the people we want are there. Remember, I am the skipper of the boat, and you are my passenger. If I am right, these are dangerous people we have to deal with. Have you got your gun with you?"

"Yes; I am seldom without it. Go ahead, Nick. I am not onto the game, but I am with you until it is played out."

Presently they reached a terraced lawn in front of the house. It had once been a handsome place, but had evidently been neglected for a long time. The grass was long and rank, and weeds were choking up what once were flower beds.

It was perfectly quiet, and there was not a sign of life around the house; but Nick, whose eyes under his shaggy, false brows, had quickly scanned every window on the front, thought he saw a woman's face disappear from an upper window as they approached the broad veranda.

"You take the lead, Flanagan," whispered Nick. "I will keep in the background, as befits a skipper. They will probably send me back to the kitchen door. We have run out of provisions and water, and put in here. That's the bluff. Push it hard. We must get into the house—by force, if necessary."

Flanagan mounted the few steps that led to the veranda, while Nick stood below in the path, staring around him as if in idle curiosity. But nothing escaped his keen eyes, out of the corners of which he was watching the front door.

Flanagan pulled the bell. It was an old-fashioned one, and Nick could hear it jangling within, but at least five minutes passed, and there was no response.

"Try it again, Flanagan," whispered Nick. "There is some one in the house. I saw a woman's face at a window as we came up the path."

Flanagan yanked the bell twice, and Nick determined that if there was no response this time he would force an entrance.

But this was not necessary. In a moment more the door was opened an inch or two, and the dark face of a man peered out.

"Gasgar!" muttered Nick. "Thank God, I was right!"

With a policeman's instinct, Flanagan thrust out his foot to prevent the door being closed in his face. Then he began a plea for food and water, but the man only shook his head, and looked blank.

"The dago doesn't understand you," roared Nick. "What ho, the house! Isn't there a Christian 'round these waters?"

The man, who had attempted to close the door but found it blocked by Flanagan's foot, turned back into the hall, and called upstairs in a foreign tongue.

Flanagan, taking advantage of this, pushed open the door and entered the hall. He was quickly followed by Nick.

The man was sputtering at the foot of the stairs.

Presently they heard a woman's voice, speaking in the same language. Then there was a rustle of skirts, and the woman appeared on the stairs.

She was beautifully proportioned, and her dark, olive face was finely chiseled.

She paused a few steps from the bottom, so that she could look down on her visitors, whom she surveyed with a quick, keen glance.

Then, apparently setting Nick down for what he appeared to be, merely a Sound skipper, she addressed herself to Flanagan.

"I trust you will pardon the delay in replying to the bell," she said, in a soft, well-modulated voice, "but I am alone with my servant. I have only recently moved here. The place is lonely, and I know no one hereabouts. I am naturally careful whom I admit. What can I do for you, sir?"

For a moment Flanagan was dazzled by the beauty and apparent refinement of the creature before him, but he pulled himself together and began to play his part.

He said he was taking his yacht up to New York, that the skipper had failed to provision her properly, and that they had run out of food and water.

The woman listened, without interrupting him, her eyes now and then glancing over his head at Nick, who stood awkwardly twirling his hat in his hand, and gazing with seeming curiosity around the spacious hall.

When Flanagan had finished, she inclined her head slightly in proudly regal manner, as if granting some royal favor.

"I am not yet settled, sir, so far as the furnishing of the house, but I can give you food and drink."

Then she turned to the little dark man, who had been standing in the shadow down the hall, and spoke to him in his native tongue. Turning again to Flanagan, she said:

"If your man will go with my servant to the kitchen, he will be served there."

As she spoke, she turned to Nick and looked him straight in the eye. For a moment the detective felt that his disguise had been penetrated, but he at once cast this thought aside as improbable.

With an awkward bow, a shuffle of his feet, and a "thank ye, marm," growled in his throat, Nick rolled along in the wake of the servant. Then the woman spoke again to the man.. This time her tone was sharp, and she spoke hurriedly in a manner that indicated both explanation and command.

Instinctively Nick felt that the words concerned himself, and he caught a look of surprise—almost wonder—that flashed into the man's face.

Again Nick's suspicions returned, and this time he did not cast them aside, but determined to be constantly on his guard, until he decided to act in his proper person.

As the detective and the servant disappeared into the regions beyond the hall, the woman turned to Flanagan and said:

"Now, sir, if you will come with me to the dining room, and pardon its present bareness, I will see what I can offer you for refreshment."

Lacking the intuition of the detective, and entirely without suspicion of danger, Flanagan bowed magnificently, and followed the woman into a room beyond the parlor.

When Nick entered the kitchen he glanced quickly around—as was his custom when he felt that quick action might at any time be called for—and in a moment the room was photographed in his mind. The furniture consisted of a table, two chairs, and the stove. The servant pointed to one of the chairs, and the detective, with an, "aye, aye, my hearty!" dropped into it with a clumsy lurch.

The man glanced at him out of the corner of his eye, and then he went to a closet, from which he took some cold meat and bread. These he placed on the table, and motioned Nick to draw up.

Then he brought a knife and fork and a glass of milk, all the time moving as softly and silently as a cat, his eyes constantly flashing from Nick to the door by which they had entered.

"Pretty near time for me to get busy with that heathen, or he will be getting busy with me," thought Nick, as he pretended to attack his food in the manner that the character that he represented might have done.

But, all the time, he was watching the man, who could not have made a hostile move that would not have been promptly met.

"Guess I might as well start the action. There is no use in letting the enemy have the first move, even if you are prepared for it. Slips sometimes happen."

A moment later, when he knew that the man was watching him, Nick began to peer about as if in search of something on the table. Then he looked up and roared:

"Heave alongside, my hearty, and unload a cargo of salt."

At the same time he made pantomimic movements as if shaking salt over his meat.

The man nodded comprehendingly, and turned to the closet. In a moment he approached the table with a salt shaker in his hand. He stood close beside Nick as he placed it on the table at his plate.

In a flash the detective had him by the throat, and Nick's powerful fingers shut off his breath before he could utter a cry. Much as Nick Carter shrinks from giving pain to others, he felt that there was no help for it this time, and he held his thumbs pressed against the man's windpipe until his form relaxed when unconsciousness came.

Then Nick thrust his handkerchief into his mouth and tied it behind his head as a gag. With a piece of curtain cord he made his hands fast behind his back, and then thrust the unconscious form under the table.

Nick had worked fast. Scarcely ten minutes had elapsed since he had entered the room. For a moment he stood still, listening for some sound from the other part of the house, but all was silent. With some misgivings, the detective tiptoed into the hall and noiselessly approached the door of the dining room. It was closed, and he listened for a moment, with his hand on the knob.

Then he dashed open the door, and sprang into the room.

Flanagan was lying face down upon the floor, and the woman was on her knees beside him, tying his hands with a napkin!

With a sharp cry, she sprang to her feet, and rushed toward the table.

Nick Carter, however, was there first, and his hand closed over a pistol just as she frantically reached for it.

As she did so, Nick seized her, and the next moment he had snapped a pair of handcuffs on her wrists.

Then the detective quickly locked the doors that led into the parlor and kitchen, and dropped the keys into his pocket.

Without paying any more attention to the woman, he dropped on his knees beside Flanagan, released his hands, and turned him over on his back. He was unconscious, and breathing heavily.

"What have you done to him, you devil?" demanded Nick.

The woman shrugged her shoulders, with a wicked smile.

"I will leave that for you to find out, Mr. Detective," she replied.

Nick bent a little closer to Flanagan, and then drew back, muttering:

"Some strange narcotic."

He then began to chafe the policeman's hands, and as he did so, Flanagan opened his eyes dreamily.

"Where am I?" he whispered, and then seeing Nick kneeling beside him, he smiled faintly and said:

"She got me, Nick. I'm a lobster."

The woman, who had been watching Nick closely, burst into a wicked laugh.

"How do you feel, old man?" asked Nick.

"I'm getting all right now. Don't bother with me. I guess I will come around all right in a few minutes. Serves me right for giving her the chance to do me."

Seeing that Flanagan was in no danger, Nick turned to the sneering woman.

"Princess Tanza," he said quietly, "what have you done with Princess Zora and my assistant?"

The woman shrugged her shoulders.

"I think I will leave that to you. What is the use of a detective if he cannot find things out for himself?"

Once more she burst into a grating laugh.

"Very well, madame; you force me to unpleasant extremities."

Nick approached the woman and gently thrust her into a chair. With the bonds he had removed from the policeman he tied her ankles together. Then he bound her securely to the chair.

CHAPTER X.

TANZA'S STORY.

Nick opened the door into the kitchen, and the little brown man glared at him from under the table. Nick, always humane, removed the gag from his mouth.

"Now, Gasgar," he said, "you can make all the noise you wish. It can do no harm, now that I have Princess Tanza's wings clipped."

For a moment he stood thinking.

"I'll start with the cellar," he muttered finally, and, opening the door that led to the regions below, he descended a pair of rickety stairs into darkness. He flashed his lamp, and uttered a cry of joy.

In a dark corner lay a motionless form. It was Chick! He was conscious, but, although he could not speak, he smiled into the eyes of his chief.

It was only a matter of seconds to release him, and remove the gag from his mouth. He was stiff, and his mouth so parched that he could not speak at first.

"Never mind, my boy," said Nick. "Don't try to talk yet."

Then he took from his pocket a small flask of spirits, and held it to Chick's lips.

In a comparatively short time Chick was able to get on his feet, and climb the stairs to the kitchen.

Gasgar still lay where Nick had left him when he removed the gag. Chick looked at the man with a grin.

Then they passed into the dining room. Tanza, though bound and helpless, still wore her satanic smile.

"I see you have won again, Mr. Detective," she said.

"I usually do in the end, Princess Tanza, or, to be more impersonal, right always triumphs over wrong. And now do you feel inclined to tell me where I shall find Zora?"

"Inasmuch as you would find her yourself, anyway, I have no objection to telling you that she is in the front attic room. If you will release me I will find the key for you."

"Thank you, princess," said the detective. "Locks do not trouble me much, and I prefer to let you wear those bracelets until I have finished my work here. You are too much a mistress of trickery for me to take any more chances with you. How are you, Flanagan?"

"Oh, I'm all right now, Nick. I have had a very pleasant time with your friend. She's a charming companion. Just sat there and grinned at me. She's got her nerve with her, all right."

Nick then made his way quickly to the attic room, where he found the front room locked. It was only a matter of a moment, however, for him to throw the bolt with his picklock.

As he opened the door, a woman sprang up from a chair where she had been seated.

"Mr. Carter!" she cried, when she saw Nick. "Thank God! I knew you would find me! Tell me of Franz! Is he well?"

"Yes, Zora," said the detective gently. "As well as he can be with the devilment of Princess Tanza piling up horrors around him."

"Oh, Mr. Carter, take me to him! Take me to him!"

"We shall go to him at once, Zora," said the detective, smiling gently. "And I can assure you that he is no less anxious than you for a reunion. Come, he is not far away. Have you anything that you want to take away from here?"

"Absolutely nothing, Mr. Carter. Not even a hat or an outer garment."

"Your visit to your sister was quite an impromptu one, I take it," laughed Nick. "You shall tell me about it on your way home."

Fifteen minutes later the *Flash* was headed across the Sound again.

Gasgar had been bundled unceremoniously down into the cuddy, and Tanza, with her bonds removed, sat between Nick and Chick, while Dannenhauer and his wife, with their hands clasped like children, occupied a strategic position on the deck house to the leeward of the closely trimmed sail, and thus out of view of the other occupants of the boat.

"Now, Rogers," said Nick cheerfully, "back to Rye as fast as your boat can make it."

"Well, I'll be darned if this isn't the dingdest excursion I ever went on. But I kinder like it, just the same.

Back to Rye, eh? All right. I'll put her through her paces for ye."

"Now, Nick," said Flanagan, "do you mind letting me in? I seem to be in the position of having to report two murders in my bailiwick, and I presume your two prisoners are to be charged with the crimes. I don't know anything more about it than a rabbit, and I suppose after the four-card-flush I played back in the house there, I'm not really entitled to any more consideration than a rabbit."

"Don't take it too hard, Flanagan," laughed Nick. "You did not know what you were up against when you were dealing with Princess Tanza. Although I admit that I felt that she had penetrated my disguise, I did not look for any such quick action on her part. But she is a very clever woman, when you consider that she springs from a race of semisavages."

Nick then related in detail the story of Dannenhauer's romance, and the tragedies that had accompanied it.

"But how is it, chief, that Princess Tanza and Gasgar are roaming around loose?" asked Chick. "I thought they had been held for the grand jury for the murder of Dannenhauer's cousin?"

"Ah, Chick, that was the starting point of the case. When Dannenhauer first came to me, I was not inclined to pay much attention to him. What he had to tell looked to me like nothing more than some family difference, in which, of course, I could not interfere. But when he told me of Zora changing her room and boarding up the library, I recalled something of the mystery connected with the Dunstan house, and when he described her change of manner, I thought of the resemblance between the sisters that had once before entered into the case.

"Instinctively I decided that there was something more serious in the affair than he thought, and decided to look into the matter. Intuitively I called up the district attorney's office before we started, and learned that the grand jury had failed to indict Tanza and Gasgar, and that they had been turned loose. As I say, that was the starting point; and while I was working solely on intuition and theory, I was convinced that I was right, as soon as the attempt was made on our lives on that Westchester bridge."

"But how did the incidents happen to fail, Nick?"

"You probably remember that the case was in the hands of young Davis?"

"Yes, the chap with the grouch against you because you sent up his friend, Gregory, the get-rich-quick man."

"Well, when the case came before the grand jury I was in Washington, and the indictment failed because of lack of government witnesses."

"You ought to get after that youngster for miscarriage of justice, Nick," exclaimed Chick indignantly.

"I think it will be lesson enough for him when he learns that two murders have resulted from his action," replied Nick, shrugging his shoulders. And then, turning to the woman, he said:

"Princess Tanza, I presume that you are pretty well convinced that the game is up. I admit that there is one small point which I have not been able to explain to my own satisfaction. Do you mind telling us how you turned the trick?"

Princess Tanza, who had sat quietly after entering the boat, now turned a smiling face to Nick. The devilish light in her eyes had faded out. She was once more the strangely beautiful woman.

"As it can make little difference to me now," she said, in her soft voice, "I don't see why I should not tell you. I am rather proud of having beaten you, if only for a time."

She paused a moment, thinking, and then said:

"When Gasgar and I were released I thought of nothing but revenge. I had kept myself pretty well informed even while a prisoner. It is amazing, Mr. Carter, what a little money will do in your country. I knew that Dannenhauer had gone abroad, and the insane idea flashed into my head to take Zora's place, and on his return to so work upon him as to secure the release of Thamen."

"But how did you hope to do that, princess?" asked Nick.

"I did not know. But it seemed that it had been so easy in my case, that I should not have any difficulty if I worked on Dannenhauer's love for Zora. At all events, I intended to let that part of it take care of itself, after I had once installed myself in Zora's place. I finally thought of disclosing my identity, and bargaining with him for the return of Zora against Thamen's release. But, however that was to be accomplished, my first step was to install myself in the Dannenhauer household in place of Zora.

"I went to Rye, and there found that while little was known of the Dannenhauers, there were plenty of rumors of the mysteries of the old place they had rented. I went to the agent from whom they had hired the estate, pretending that I wished to rent a place for the summer. He was a pleasant, easily fooled old man, and I led him to talk about the Dunstan place. He confirmed the stories that I had heard in the village, and there was one rumor of a hidden staircase that particularly interested me. If I could learn that secret I should have a way of entering the house, and much time and trouble in carrying out my plans would be saved. You know I have some knowledge of secret staircases, Mr. Carter."

Here Tanza flashed one of her brilliant smiles on the detective, and he recalled, with a shudder, the winding staircase within the old idol in her own country.

"You would have made a good detective, princess," said Nick, "if you had turned your talents to good instead of evil."

Tanza bowed mockingly.

"It is just this one point that I have been unable to clear up to my satisfaction," said Nick. "How did you discover the working of the secret stairway?"

"That was my brightest piece of work, Mr. Carter, and yet so simple that I am greatly surprised that a detective of your experience should not have thought of it. It occurred to me that this passage, that seemed only like a myth to the people of the neighborhood, had never been intended for any criminal purpose, and as it had been constructed since the old house was built, there might possibly be some record of it somewhere, and where more likely than in the building-department records? At the municipal building I was graciously received, and given free access to all the papers on file relating to the Dunstan place. I explained that I had some idea of purchasing it, and no one paid any attention to me after turning over the papers to me.

"And there, Mr. Carter, I found what I sought, accessi-

ble to any one—even a detective. The last paper filed in connection with the estate was a description of the alterations made by Mr. Dunstan, and contained the details of the secret staircase. Evidently no one had had the curiosity to read it after the papers were filed, or the mystery of the Dunstan place would have been a mystery no longer. The paper was plainly marked on the outside: 'Plans of alterations in the A. L. Dunstan estate.' It described the stairway, and the means by which it could be entered from both the outside and inside.

"I think you have probably guessed the rest—how I rented the old place across the Sound, and with the aid of Gasgar removed Zora, and made her a prisoner there, while I took her place. Everything was going as I had planned until I foolishly had the library boarded up, the better to conceal the secret. And then came Dannenhauer's visit to you. I had him watched by Gasgar. Then I knew that he suspected something, or that, at any rate, as soon as you became interested in the matter my plans would all be shattered. You see, I give you full credit, Mr. Carter. When Gasgar reported to me where Dannenhauer had gone, I had him cut the bridge. Oh, yes, I quite expected you would be killed. I had gone too far to turn back, and was desperate. That must be plain to you from what followed. I had made all preparations for flight, with the aid of Gasgar. When you tore down the boarding of the library I was on the secret landing outside. I knew then that my game was up, and when you left your assistant to go in search of old Davis, Gasgar and I removed him from the library. Gasgar had the wagon waiting outside. And when you left Davis after his failure to remember the secret of the staircase a mad fear seized me that the next time he would remember. That explains what happened during your short absence. Then I fled, taking your assistant with me.

"That is all, sir. It would have been better if I had waited and faced you. I might have fooled even you."

Nick shook his head.

"I do not think you would have succeeded in that for long, princess," he said, "but it would have been better—far better—for you would not then have stained your hands with the blood of two men."

By this time they were nearing Rye.

"Flanagan," said Nick, "I do not want to rob you of all your prerogatives. You will arraign the prisoners. It will be more regular, and save you from any unpleasant consequences in the future."

"Just as you say, Nick. It is certainly just like you, but I am always willing to take any chances to aid you."

"When we land you make a hustle to the nearest place where you can hire two rigs."

"I know of a place not half a mile from shore," said Flanagan. "I will not keep you waiting more than half an hour."

When the boat was made fast to the pier, Flanagan leaped out and started at a dogtrot up the road, and Nick listened to the story of his assistant, who told him in detail how Tanza had overcome him.

"It seems as if I am not much better than a baby every now and then, Nick," said Chick shamefacedly.

"I don't think you need feel badly, Chick," said Nick kindly. "You had absolutely nothing to warn you of any danger. I should probably have been caught in the same trap myself."

But Chick shook his head disconsolately.

"No," he said. "Nick Carter is always on his guard."

"Tut, tut, Chick. You do not have to hark back very far to find a time when Nick Carter was caught with his hands down. Anyway, it is all right now."

In a comparatively short time Flanagan returned, driving a horse attached to a carryall, and with another in lead.

"You will pardon me, princess," said Nick, as he again slipped handcuffs on her wrists. "Somehow, I don't think it best to take any chances."

Gasgar was dragged out of the cabin and placed in one of the wagons, and then Nick carefully assisted Tanza in.

Zora and Dannenhauer, who had come down from their secluded position on the deck house to hear Tanza's story, got into the carriage with Nick, while Chick rode with Flanagan and the prisoners.

As they drove off, Nick heard Rogers muttering:

"Well, I'll be darned!"

Nick drove rapidly to the Dunstan place, where Dannenhauer and Zora got out, while Nick stood at the horse's head.

"Carter," said Dannenhauer, who stood with his arm around his wife's waist affectionately, "you know how impossible it would be for me to express my gratitude to you in words, but there is still a monetary settlement that must be made between us."

"That's all right, Franz. We will talk about that some other time. Now I must see that those prisoners are safely stowed away."

Zora, in whose eyes tears of joy were glistening, slipped away from her husband, threw her arms around the astonished detective's neck, and kissed him full upon the lips. Then she fled back to her husband's side, her cheeks glowing red.

"God bless you!" she cried. "Franz said I could!"

THE END.

The next issue of NICK CARTER STORIES will be out October 18th, and it will be No. 58. The title of the Nick Carter story which you will find in it is rather a peculiar one, but it has a peculiar significance in connection with the story that is told. It is, "When Aces Were Trumps; or, A Hard Game to Play." The story tells more about the career of Swipes, a character that was introduced in a recent issue of this weekly, and his many gangs of crooks; for while many who were connected with the Secret Order of Associated Crooks were arrested, the root of that vicious and flourishing organization for purposes of crime had not been destroyed.

NO. 13 IN FRANCE.

The old superstitions regarding numbers and days have still a great deal of life in many parts of France. Friedland Avenue, Paris, has no No. 13, the owner of the house which should bear that number having obtained permission from the prefect of the Seine to number it "14 *bis*."

Railway receipts, and, what is far more astonishing, those of omnibus companies, show a remarkable falling off on Fridays.

At one of the monthly dinners of a group of Parisian

artists, a painter of eminence flatly refused to sit at table because there were but twelve other persons present.

The dinner was kept waiting an hour in the hope that at least one or other guest would put in an appearance; and at last the painter and another member of the company went into the street, with their minds made up to invite the first presentable individual they met to join the party. A decent-looking cab driver chanced to be passing at the time, who willingly accepted the invitation, it being an understood thing that he was to be considered as engaged by the hour at the customary fare.

Handing his whip to a brother cabman, he went with his hosts into the dining room, and was put in the seat of honor, at the right of the chairman, who was a distinguished minister of state. The cabman turned out to be a cheerful and polite individual, and he behaved himself with the utmost decorum in the brilliant company of which he so unexpectedly found himself forming a part.

FOUND GUILTY;

Or, Steve Manley Against Court and Jury.

By ALDEN F. BRADSHAW.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Steve Manley, a boy of fifteen, is among the crowd that gathers when the body of Paul Henry, cashier of The Unity Trust & Deposit Co., of Pennville, is found on the grounds of Robert Waldon, the president of the trust company, which adjoins those of the trust company. Henry has been murdered.

Anxious to become a detective, Steve, at the request of O'Mara, the chief of detectives of Pennville, goes to the home of Doctor Gaylord to summon him, in order that he may examine the body.

Doctor Gaylord had befriended Steve, and the boy revered and admired him greatly. It is with distress, therefore, that Steve finds a note from Waldon's daughter, asking Gaylord to meet her near the spot where Henry's body was found, as it is known that Gaylord and Henry were rivals for Miss Waldon's hand. Steve reluctantly gives the note to O'Mara, and resolves to clear Gaylord's name of any connection with the murder.

CHAPTER III.

AN INQUISITIVE RUFFIAN.

"I say, kid! who wos de guy wid der muffler round his pipes?"

Steve started quickly on hearing the above question addressed to him. He had brought his wheel out to the curbing, and was about to mount and away, when the heavy, rasping voice sounded close behind him.

The ambulance had departed, with Paul Henry's dead body aboard.

Chief O'Mara had entered his automobile, and with an officer had driven rapidly away.

Portly and pompous Robert Waldon had returned to his dwelling, and Doctor Howard Gaylord had strode sadly out of the grounds and was heading for home.

Even half-witted Peter Dobbs had gone as he had come, with his hands thrust into the pockets of his faded brown coat, and his sore throat bandaged voluminously.

The crowd upon the sidewalk had for the most part dispersed, and only a few of the more morbidly curious remained to stare at the fateful spot of earth on which the dead man had lain.

Among these were two men, evidently companions, and very much alike in style and aspect, one of whom had drawn nearer to Steve when he emerged from the grounds, as if he thought the youth could impart something worth knowing, yet not easily to have been acquired by those who had been forced to remain outside.

Steve turned and looked at his questioner.

He beheld a grim, heavy-visaged man in middle life, with small, gray eyes, and features rendered doubly repulsive by a stiff beard of several days' growth. It was a hard, desperate face, with beetling brows and a hang-dog look.

The ruffian was roughly clad, with his woolen shirt half open at the throat, and exposing a broad, hairy breast; and his left hand was carried in a sling, and thickly bandaged with soiled, blood-besmeared cloths.

Though a more villainous-looking ruffian never accosted man or boy, Steve Manley was not the kind who takes back water.

"What did you say?" he demanded, as he looked the man over.

"I said, who wos de guy wid der muffler round his pipes?" repeated the ruffian, with a scowl and a lingo that smacked of the lowest dives.

"Do you mean the dead man?"

"Naw!" growled the fellow, with a scornful oath. "Where's yer eddication? I mean der bloke in der brown snakeskin, him as had his tubes tied up, and his dukes shoved inter his pockets."

"Oh, that was Dobbs!" exclaimed Steve. "He's nobody."

"He looked it!"

"He was only a watchman in the grounds last night."

"He wos a good un to have! Couldn't the duffer tell who 'twas put out der covey's light?"

"Put out what light?"

"Him's as was croaked, o' course!" growled the ruffian, quite violently. "Some un croaked der bloke, didn't they? What good wos der watchman in der snakeskin, if he didn't twig der job?"

"He evidently wasn't around when it was done," returned Steve, finally grasping what the ruffian was driving at.

"Didn't der fly copper discover nuthin'?"

"I guess not," replied Steve, turning away. "He didn't tell me anything."

"He'd been like to writ it all down for yer, if he had, wouldn't he?"

Steve made no reply to this ungracious retort. He threw his leg over his saddle, and paused for a moment to fix his foot in the toeclip of his pedal. Then, as the ruffian rejoined his companion, Steve heard him grimly but quietly observe, with a sudden growl:

"She looks like she wos all wool an' a yard wide, Waddy; an' dat's what comes of a crooked duffer givin' a square gun der chilly mit! Dis 'ere's der way."

Then Steve started off like the wind, for it was nearly time for him to be at his desk.

He had not ridden a hundred yards, however, when he abruptly slowed down, shot up to the curbing, and again sprang from his wheel.

"Great guns! that was curious, now that I come to think

of it!" he exclaimed to himself, looking back up the street.

"Why did that ugly ruffian ask me those questions? Why was he interested in Dobbs, or in what Chief O'Mara had discovered? What did he mean by a crooked duffer giving a square gun the chilly mitt? And what brought two such fellows to this part of the city at this hour in the day?"

Looking up the street, Steve again located the two men.

They were swaggering moderately in his direction, the man with the injured hand a little in advance.

"I'll take time to see where they go, by gracious, if nothing more," Steve suddenly decided, so impressed was he by the occurrence.

He ran his wheel to the next corner, on which a bicycle repair shop was located, and arranged to leave it there until called for. Then he darted across the street and prepared to shadow the two men.

It took him nearly two hours to run them to cover. Before this was accomplished, Steve had decided that both men were more or less strangers in Pennville, for their movements indicated that they were not at all familiar with the streets.

But about ten o'clock they halted in front of an inferior wooden hotel in one of the lowest and most disreputable localities along the river front, and after a brief consultation, and a critical survey of the exterior of the house, they evidently decided to locate there.

Steve watched them enter the dingy office and barroom on the street floor. He saw them bargaining for quarters with a red-headed landlord as rough and uncouth as themselves, and finally sign their names to a dog-eared register. Then the fellow with the injured hand drew quite a wad of bank notes from his pocket and paid a sum in advance.

"They evidently mean to remain there for a time," decided Steve; "and you may cut off my ears if I don't keep an eye on them."

The bill having been paid, the red-headed man set up a round of drinks on the bar; and presently, at a sign from one, he led them out through a passage at the rear of the barroom, and up a gloomy flight of stairs.

"They've gone to their rooms," decided Steve. "I will take a chance to learn their names."

Darting across the street he quickly entered the dive, which was then unoccupied, and hurriedly read the two names scrawled upon the dirty register.

"Bill Rohan."

"Waddy Dumfrie."

These were the two names, and there was no home address attached.

"The one who spoke to me is Rohan," thought Steve. "I heard him call the other one Waddy."

Having fixed the names in his mind, Steve hurriedly left the place without having been observed, and now hastened to report at the office in which he was employed.

At precisely noon that day he appeared at the police headquarters, according to the appointment made, and found Chief O'Mara ready to receive him. He found the noted detective seated at the desk in his private office, and Steve quietly closed the door by which he had entered and respectfully approached him.

Chief O'Mara regarded him with a frown, and demanded quite sharply:

"Well, my boy, who was that party to whom you confided the fact that you had found a letter this morning?"

But Steve Manley was not to be caught napping by a ruse of this kind.

"The party was Chief O'Mara," he promptly rejoined, with a quick flash of his blue eyes.

"None other?"

"None other, sir. I'd not begin thus early to disobey orders."

Chief O'Mara smiled gravely and signed for Steve to come nearer.

"I have had a talk with one of your employers, Stephen Manley," he now said kindly. "He informs me that you are an honest and capable boy, with a tact for detective work. I learned from him that you recently detected a piece of fraudulent work on the part of his cashier, by which was prevented quite a serious defalcation. This is true, is it not?"

"Yes, Chief O'Mara, it is," said Steve, with becoming modesty.

"And you are quite sure that you wish to give up your present vocation, with all its prospects, in order to become a detective?"

"That is just the size of it, Chief O'Mara."

"Do you realize that a detective's work is an uncertain and dangerous one?"

"It is not more uncertain for me than for others, sir, and I do not fear danger," Steve quickly answered.

"That sounds well," smiled the chief. "Have you given the subject serious consideration?"

"I have, sir; and am fully determined."

"Are either of your parents alive?"

"No, sir; they both were drowned in the Galveston flood."

"Have you no relatives?"

"Only an aunt, who lives in California, sir. I never have seen her."

"Have you earned your own living since the death of your parents?"

"No, sir; I was only three years old then. But I have supported myself since I was twelve years old, when my uncle died!"

"That speaks well for you," nodded Chief O'Mara, signing Steve to a chair.

"I have decided," he went on, "to give you a trial in this work in which you seem to have a leaning. Should you find it distasteful later on, or should I find that you are not adapted to the work, I have arranged to have your employer take you back in your present position."

"That was very kind of you, Chief O'Mara," said Steve gratefully; "but I feel sure of myself in the change."

"Don't be too sure, my lad. Experience will teach you that this business has little to commend it. If you are ready to go to work at once, I shall now consider you one of my working staff."

"I am ready, chief," said Steve, with a quick flash of pride. "I await your orders."

But Chief O'Mara was not ready to issue orders to this enthusiastic young subordinate. He spent considerable time in further questioning Steve, and imparting such instructions as naturally were necessary. It was nearly one

o'clock before he broached the actual work upon which Steve was to engage. Then he said gravely:

"I am going to let you continue looking into the case which came up this morning, young man."

"Very well, Chief O'Mara."

"And in order that I may observe you from a standpoint of my own, I shall for the present let you work in your own way, without giving you explicit instructions. You may investigate this case involving the death of Paul Henry in any way you choose, and report to me when you discover anything you think worth reporting. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"I presume you have discovered nothing further since morning?" smiled Chief O'Mara, with a rather quizzical expression in his grave eyes.

Steve remained silent for a moment, and then decided that he would wait till he was dead sure of something, and not make disclosures upon a mere theory, which might prove groundless.

"Nothing worth reporting, Chief O'Mara," he replied. "But I have ideas of my own, sir, and I hope soon to report something of consequence."

Chief O'Mara laughed. He did not have much faith in this experiment, despite that Steve evidently was a bright lad. Reverting to him after a moment, he asked gravely:

"Who answered the bell, Steve, when you took my message to Doctor Gaylord?"

"Doctor Gaylord himself, sir."

"Did you find him up and dressed?"

"I did, sir, which struck me as being rather odd, since it was barely six o'clock in the morning."

"Did he make any comment when you told him what was wanted?"

"None, sir."

"That is all at present, then," said Chief O'Mara. "Remember what I have told you, and set about your work promptly."

"I am already about it, Chief O'Mara," said Steve, rising. "I shall not forget a word you have said, sir, and I shall make a report as soon as I have one worth submitting."

"You'll find me ready to hear it," the chief kindly rejoined; and then, with a nod, he dismissed the young detective from his office.

CHAPTER IV.

STEVE GETS DOWN TO WORK.

During that day and evening Steve cautiously kept an eye on the two men he had observed that morning, but discovered nothing to occasion suspicion. Yet the more he thought of them, the more certain he felt that he was on the right track.

On the following morning, however, the Pennville newspapers came out with glaring headlines and the startling announcement that Doctor Howard Gaylord had been arrested for the murder of Paul Henry, and that the evidence against him was so conclusive that bail had been denied him.

Of what this evidence consisted the papers could not state.

The physician himself had positively refused to be interviewed, and the police likewise declined to disclose any facts before the case came into court.

At first the news fell like a wet blanket upon Steve Manley, and he flew to the police headquarters to ask the advice of Chief O'Mara.

The latter smiled at Steve's manifest dismay.

"Yes, Doctor Gaylord has been arrested," he kindly explained; "but that does not necessarily end the investigation. A man's guilt is not established by his arrest. There is some very serious evidence against Doctor Gaylord, and it may be brought out in court to-morrow morning, providing he does not decide to waive a hearing. In that case it will be laid before the grand jury, and if a bill is found against him, he will be held for trial."

"Doesn't Doctor Gaylord deny the charge, Chief O'Mara?" asked Steve, in tones that trembled some despite him.

"Doctor Gaylord refuses to open his mouth one way or the other, and has placed his case entirely in the hands of his lawyer. This arrest, Steve, need not deter you from keeping at work on the case. It results from certain facts learned by my detectives; and, as Doctor Gaylord has refused to make any explanation, his arrest became imperative. You may go into court to-morrow morning and hear what is said."

"In the criminal court, chief?"

"Yes; before Judge Brady. Meantime, if anything turns up to negative the case against the physician, or to incriminate other parties, so much the better."

Steve now began to see the affair in a more hopeful light, and he at once started out upon a plan which he had formed in mind the previous evening.

Half an hour later he rang the bell of a modest wooden dwelling in Bates Street, the door of which bore the equally modest name of Dobbs.

His ring was answered by a bright, buxom girl of seventeen, who at once exclaimed:

"Oh, Steve, is it you!"

Steve had been acquainted with her for several years, and she was the sister of Peter Dobbs.

"Yes, Betty, it is I," he replied, entering the house. "And I'm in a peck of trouble."

"You're not alone, Steve!" exclaimed the girl. "So are we!"

"You?" inquired Steve. "What trouble are you in?"

"Peter's missing!"

"Peter missing? Good gracious, I came round here to see him! Missing, since when?"

"Since yesterday morning, Steve," Betsy Dobbs explained. "He put on his coat and went out before breakfast, and he hasn't been seen since."

"But I saw him at Mr. Waldon's when the body of Paul Henry was discovered."

"Yes, we know about that, Steve. We heard that he was up there at that time; but he did not come home from there, nor can we learn anything further about him."

"That seems rather strange."

"Nothing of the kind ever occurred before, Steve. We are dreadfully anxious."

"Didn't he say where he was going?"

"Not a word, Steve."

"Well, I wouldn't worry," said Steve, quite absently. "I think he will turn up all right."

He had thrust his hands into his pockets, and was star-

ing straight at the floor, so intense was his sudden train of thought. It seemed mighty strange to him that Peter Dobbs, the watchman at Waldon's that fateful night, should now be mysteriously missing.

"I say, Betty," he suddenly cried, looking up; "you knew Paul Henry, didn't you?"

"I'd ought to!" exclaimed the girl. "I have taken care of his house for more than two years—ever since his mother died."

"Lived alone, didn't he?"

"All alone, Steve. He took his meals out."

"And you've been keeping his house in order?"

"Yes, Steve," replied Betty, wondering at his earnestness.

"How did you get in?"

"With a key, of course. I have been going up there every day for two years to make his bed, and do such housework as was necessary."

"Every day, did you say?"

"Every blessed day, Steve."

"Were you there the day before he was killed?"

"Well, no; not that day, Steve," and the girl now hastened to correct herself. "He told me last Sunday that I needn't come again for a week, as he was thinking of going away, and I wouldn't be needed."

"Then you haven't been up there for four days, Betty?" demanded Steve.

"No, not since Sunday. But what's the matter with you? You act excited."

"Oh, I am not excited; only I'm hit with an idea," said Steve, more calmly. "Betty, have you still got the key to Henry's house?"

"Sure I have."

"I want to go in there."

"But he might object!" the girl impulsively exclaimed.

"Well, it won't be in this world, if he does," Steve quickly rejoined. "So get your hat and come along with me. I must see the inside of Paul Henry's house this very morning."

"Good gracious, Steve, what ails you? Is it so important?"

"Yes, it is!" cried Steve, with added feeling. "You know Doctor Gaylord, Betty?"

"Of course I know him! He's our doctor, and poor Peter just worships the ground Doctor Gaylord walks on. He has done more for Peter, and been kind to him in more ways, than any man in Pennville. Peter just would die for Doctor Gaylord, if it were necessary."

Steve's mind was very active just then. He was putting this and that together, and he now felt more than ever certain that he was on a promising trail.

"And that very fact may—— Say! can you keep a secret?" he abruptly broke off to demand.

"That's what I can, Steve, if it's necessary."

"Then I will trust you. The very fact that Peter loves Doctor Gaylord in his simple fashion may explain Peter's sudden absence."

"How so, Steve?"

"Because Doctor Gaylord is suspected of the murder of Paul Henry, and he is now under arrest. Peter was about there that night, and may have seen something he now fears to disclose lest it should harm the physician. But I'll wager he has made a mistake of some kind, for I'll never believe Doctor Gaylord committed this crime. Say, Betty, did Peter know that the doctor was in love with Celia Waldon?"

"Indeed he did! Miss Waldon used to get him to carry her letters to the doctor. Peter knew all about it."

"Take my word for it, then, Peter has run away to avoid telling something!" cried Steve excitedly. "But I'll wager he has made a blunder of some kind. Get your hat. I must get into Paul Henry's house this very morning."

"Wait a bit!" cried the girl, now both relieved and excited. "I'll keep you waiting but a moment."

As they hurried away upon their mission, Steve further informed her of the work he was now doing, and again bound her to rigid secrecy. He had but little trouble in doing this, however, for Betty Dobbs thought pretty well of Steve Manley.

It was about half past nine when they arrived at the door of Paul Henry's house, in Bellefield Avenue.

"We must look sharp, Betty," said Steve, as the girl produced the key. "The doctor comes into court for a hearing this morning, and I must get down there before it ends."

"As sharp as you like, Steve," replied Betty, opening the door of the rather imposing residence.

"Can you tell if any strangers have been in here?'

"I think quite likely, Steve."

"Look about, and see. Go into every room," cried Steve. "Examine every bed. I am going to have a look down cellar."

Leaving the girl to go one way, Steve went the other. He found nothing suspicious in the cellar, nor in the laundry, neither of which seemed to have been recently used.

But in the basement kitchen, to which he next turned, he was more successful. On lifting one of the covers of the somewhat rusted range, an irrepressible cry of exultation broke from his lips. The first thing to meet his searching gaze was quite a collection of soiled, partly burned rags, besmeared with blood, and which evidently had been ignited and left to burn, the flames having expired because of the exceeding dampness of the unused range and chimney.

"The man with the injured hand!" Steve audibly cried, in the excitement of the moment. "By gracious! but this is a find worth making."

Carefully removing the charred and soiled bandages, Steve wrapped them in a newspaper and hastened to rejoin Betty in the hall above.

"Well, what have you discovered?" he demanded eagerly, on observing her evident excitement.

"Somebody has been in the house."

"Are you sure?"

"I am that!" cried the girl. "A bed in one of the upper rooms has been slept in."

"Good for you, Betty!"

"And that's not the strangest of it."

"What more?"

"Half of one of the sheets is missing."

"And I know where it has gone!"

"Where, Steve?"

"To make a sling and a bandage for a wounded hand!" cried Steve exultantly. "Is the other half left here?"

"It is upstairs on the closet floor."

"Come, and we'll get it. I must have that, also."

"What's in your bundle?"

"Old bandages, Betty, removed from Rohan's hand when he made new ones torn from the missing sheet," Steve excitedly explained. "I am dead certain now that I am on the right track. Let me alone, Betty, and I'll yet pull the doctor out of his scrape."

But Steve was nearly due for the greatest set-back that he yet had suffered.

Leaving the house with his bundle under his arm, he again cautioned Betty against disclosing anything; and, having again been assured of her silence, he hastened to board a car for the courthouse two miles away.

CHAPTER V.

FOUND GUILTY.

Contrary to expectations, Doctor Howard Gaylord did not waive a hearing before the court that morning, and the intense interest of the public in the extraordinary case was satisfied far earlier than most people were expecting.

Before nine o'clock, the hour when the court came in, the great courtroom was packed to the very doors, and the corridors and stairways adjoining were rendered quite impassable by the great gathering of curious people. Everybody seemed to be on pins and needles of excitement, and wild to learn what discoveries by Chief O'Mara's detectives could have resulted so speedily in Gaylord's arrest.

At precisely nine o'clock the buzz of excitement was silenced by the vociferous admonition of the court crier, and Judge Brady entered from his private room and took his seat on the bench.

He glanced over the scene with a look of grave surprise; he had seen a crowded courtroom before, but never a room in which spectators were packed as close as sardines in a box. Even the bar inclosure was entirely occupied by interested lawyers.

Judge Brady only had taken his seat, when there suddenly arose the tumult of renewed excitement, some features of which attested the popularity of the local physician.

"That's Gaylord!"

"Here comes the physician!"

"There's the doctor!"

These were the declarations whispered by a hundred pairs of excited lips, when a side door near the bench was opened, and Doctor Gaylord was led in by an officer and given a seat near the prisoner's dock.

Doctor Gaylord was very pale, but his bearing was that of perfect composure and impressive dignity. He gave no attention to the dense crowd of spectators; but toward a pale young lady in a seat among the witnesses he bent one grave, encouraging look, then bowed and faintly smiled.

This girl was Celia Waldon, the banker's daughter, and the heiress whom Paul Henry unexpectedly had, on the very afternoon of his death, been invited to wed.

"Silence in the court!"

Again the loud voice of the crier quelled the noise in the courtroom, and in another moment the examination was begun.

It cannot be presented in detail, with all its lights and shades; but, one after another, the witnesses ferreted out by the detectives were called to the stand, and the case against the physician took shape with alarming and resistless significance.

It was shown that, about ten o'clock on the night of the crime, Doctor Gaylord was seen by several to scale the rear fence of the Waldon estate, and cautiously approach the Trust Building; and by others that, at about this time, the light in the bank was extinguished, indicating that Paul Henry was about departing. That the cashier must have left by the side door, which opened directly into the Waldon park, also was easily proved, as the front steps were at that time occupied by cabmen awaiting the guests from the Waldon reception.

It was shown that, under these conditions, a meeting between Gaylord and the cashier could hardly have been avoided.

Added to this was the testimony of the detectives to the facts that Doctor Gaylord had positively refused to make any statement as to what had occurred there; and that, instead of personally performing the legally required autopsy upon the remains of the murdered man, he had imposed the task upon the medical examiner from another district, indicating that Doctor Gaylord had strenuous reasons for evading that duty.

Then the letter found by Steve Manley was submitted to the court, suggesting the strained relations which probably existed between the prisoner and the deceased; and at that point of the inquest, and amid the breathless expectancy of the dense crowd, Celia Waldon was commanded to take the witness stand.

The face of the girl was like marble in its whiteness.

Though raised to her feet by her father, by whom she was accompanied, she seemed scarce able to stand.

It was evident to every observer, not that she was overcome by the appalling evidence already produced against the man she loved, but by that which she realized must fall from her own lips if she spoke the truth.

But as she tottered toward the witness stand, there came an interruption from the last person from whom an interruption was anticipated.

Doctor Howard Gaylord, who till then had sat silent and apparently unmoved, suddenly sprang to his feet, passionately waving aside his legal adviser, who was striving to check him, and, with a voice that rang like a trumpet through the crowded courtroom, he cried sternly:

"Let this go no further! I appeal to your honor, the court, this girl shall not be forced to testify against me!"

"Silence, prisoner!" shouted the crier.

"I will be silenced when I have had my say!" thundered Gaylord, with his head suddenly uplifted and a flood of crimson dyeing either cheek.

"This inquest shall go no further," he went on, in tones that rose above the swelling tumult and excitement. "This witness shall not be forced to outrage every sentiment of her girlish heart. I will prevent it by my own avowal. Your police and detectives are right, Judge Brady. I was in Waldon Park on the night of the crime, and mine was the hand that killed Paul Henry!"

It was not until this moment that Steve Manley succeeded in forcing his way to one of the doors of the crowded courtroom, and the voluntary confession of the physician fell upon his ears with an effort hardly to be

imagined. It crumbled his every hope, ruined the theory on which he was working, and left him for the moment without a foot to stand on.

"Good heavens, that does settle it!" he groaned aloud, still hugging in his arms the bundle he had brought from Paul Henry's dwelling. "That does end it, for sure!"

In the midst of the tumultuous excitement which followed the physician's confession, however, Steve's dismay and agitation were wholly unobserved.

Doctor Gaylord still retained his position of the floor.

Celia Waldon had fallen, half fainting, into the chair from which she had risen.

Under the forcible efforts of the court officers and the police, the tumult in the courtroom was gradually subsiding, and at the end of another minute Judge Brady was able to make himself heard.

"Doctor Gaylord," he said slowly, with his grave gaze now turned upon the physician's white face, "do you fully realize the import of your avowal?"

The physician drew up his splendid figure to its full height, and, with a grandeur of which he was wholly unconscious, yet which imposed an immediate silence throughout the room, he answered deeply:

"I realize my position perfectly, your honor."

"And you now confess to having killed Paul Henry?"

"I do, your honor! I alone am responsible for Paul Henry's death."

"Why have you deferred this confession until now?"

"Because I have yielded to the advice and appeals of others, rather than to the dictates of my own judgment and conscience. I repeat, your honor, I alone am responsible for the killing of Henry, and I now am ready to suffer the penalty."

Judge Brady's grave countenance softened slightly.

Amid a silence so profound that a pin might have been heard to fall, he asked slowly:

"Are there any extenuating circumstances, Doctor Gaylord?"

"I will answer any questions which your honor may be inclined to ask," replied the physician simply.

Though he voluntarily had confessed his own transgression, it now was equally apparent that he shrank from voluntarily exposing the sins of others.

Judge Brady drew himself up in his chair and bent forward to rest his arm on his desk.

"What occasioned your visit to the Waldon grounds on the night in question, Doctor Gaylord?" he inquired.

"I went there in response to the letter which already has been submitted to the court."

"Did you meet Miss Waldon, as that letter intimates?"

"I did meet her, your honor."

"Did she give you any reasons for desiring the meeting?"

"She did, your honor."

"Will you state the reasons given you?"

"Yes, your honor," said Doctor Gaylord, with unchanging voice and countenance. "Miss Waldon and myself have been secretly betrothed for nearly a year. Our acquaintance has been rigidly opposed by her father. On the afternoon of the day in question, her father threatened to disinherit her unless she should consent to a marriage with Paul Henry, who that same afternoon had been invited by Mr. Waldon to wed his daughter."

"Do you know whether or not Paul Henry favored this proposal?"

"I was informed by Miss Waldon that he did, who so had been informed by her father."

"Are these the facts of the case, Mr. Waldon?" asked Judge Brady, turning briefly to the banker.

Robert Waldon, like a man crushed by the results of his own arbitrary severity, sat with his head bowed in his hands. But he raised his ghastly face upon hearing the question, and faintly answered:

"Yes, they are the facts."

Judge Brady's eyes reverted to those of the prisoner.

"What more, Doctor Gaylord, did Miss Waldon say in explanation of her letter?"

"She said that her distress had led her to implore me to meet her that night, that I might at once be informed of the unexpected emergency which had arisen, and which she feared might require decisive if not hasty action on her part. In a word, your honor, she wanted to learn if my home was open to her, in event that her own was closed against her. Your honor, I gave her the assurance she desired."

"Under what circumstances did you encounter Paul Henry?"

"While conversing with Miss Waldon," replied the physician, "I suddenly heard him address me. I at once suspected that our meeting had been watched by him, and in my anger and resentment I scarce heard what he said. I think he ordered me out of the grounds, or made some other arrogant if not scurrilous remark. I already was much exercised by what I heard from Miss Waldon, and when I turned and saw the man who, at her father's instigation, was willing to come between us, I answered his words with a blow. It was a blow given in a moment of intense passion, your honor, and the unfortunate recipient was felled to the ground."

"What followed, Doctor Gaylord?"

"Instantly regretting my hasty act, I knelt beside him in the darkness, intending to make such reparation as became me, when, to my intense dismay and horror, I found him apparently lifeless."

"Continue, sir."

"Distracted by the awful discovery, and scarce responsible for my actions, I hastened with Miss Waldon from the fatal spot, and sent her into her home. I then returned to my own dwelling."

"Did you make no further examination of the victim of your assault?"

"I did, your honor. Long after midnight I returned to the spot, and found the man lying dead where I had left him. There was nothing I then could do, unless I had done what I now am doing; but I deferred that for divers reasons."

"Anything more, Doctor Gaylord?"

"I do not feel that I can add anything at present to the confession I now have made, your honor. I made it a little tardily, perhaps, but, perhaps, not less voluntarily than if made within the hour of the crime. Your honor, I repeat once more, I alone am responsible for Paul Henry's death."

As the last deeply spoken words fell from Doctor Gaylord's lips, he gravely bowed to the court, and quietly resumed the chair from which he so impulsively had risen only a few minutes before.

Not a sound broke the silence that followed, and which lasted for nearly a minute.

To many there the interval seemed more like an hour, so freighted was it with the awful possibilities hanging upon the silent deliberation of the grave-visaged jurist upon the bench.

At the end of that minute Judge Brady broke the silence.

"The court," he said slowly and with profound solemnity, "will at the proper time make a thorough examination of the evidence in this case. Under the circumstances, the court has no alternative but to find the prisoner guilty, and to order his detention in custody."

Doctor Gaylord bowed slightly, but the expression of his fine, grave countenance did not change by so much as a shadow on hearing the decree of the court.

Found guilty through his own confession.

Found guilty upon the testimony of police and detectives.

Found guilty under circumstances which seemed to admit of neither doubt nor hope of the contrary.

What wonder that Steve Manley was for the time staggered by this utterly unexpected turn of affairs.

TO BE CONTINUED.

EXPLANATION OF A PASSPORT.

A passport is a license to travel, and also a safe conduct, or warrant of protection. By means of it monarchs or governments restrain the entrance of foreigners into their dominions, or the exit of their subjects from their territories, and also endeavor to secure the safety and freedom of their subjects while traveling abroad. Passports are of very ancient date, and the first on record was mentioned by Balzac as having been given by the Roman Emperor Julius Cæsar to a philosopher. It was in the terms following, namely: "If there be any one, on land or sea, hardy enough to molest Potamou, let him consider whether he be strong enough to wage war with Cæsar." The system became very oppressive in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century, and still remains so as far as Russia is concerned. In all European countries, save the United Kingdom, passports still continue to exist.

HOW TO TAKE A FEATHER BED FROM A HAT.

Yes, actually to pull and shake out enough feathers to make a respectably large bed. "How is it done?" Well, this is the way.

Hanging from the back of a table is a small bag, packed tight with fine down. Enough of the down to make a great show when picked out and spread about with the fingers can be packed in a bag small enough to go inside a hat. Having your bag all ready, the next thing is to get it into the hat without being seen. This is effected thus:

Take the bag in your left hand, keeping it down behind the table, and the hat in your right hand. Bring your left hand and the bag even with the edge of the table, and immediately place the hat over both and begin brushing it with your right hand. This movement is such a natural one that it will not be suspected. After the brushing is completed withdraw the left hand and take hold of the rim of the hat with it. Take the hat toward the owner, as if you were about returning it to him, when you suddenly stop, affect surprise, and putting the fingers of your right hand in the hat loose the drawing string of the bag, and begin to put out the feathers; work your fingers down into them and bring up a handful and spread them out, and they will seem to be thrown up, as if coming from a spring. This you continue until the supply is exhausted, by which time you will have seemingly such a quantity as to astonish not only the audience but yourself the first time you perform the trick. The bag which held the feathers you can take out of the hat at any time by rolling it up and concealing it in your hand. Brush all the feathers from both inside and outside of the hat, return it to the owner with thanks, and bow your acknowledgments of the applause which you are sure to obtain.

ENGAGING A THIEF.

A French nobleman who had suffered much from thieves at St. Petersburg made a wager with a member of the royal family that he could produce a Russian thief who would rob a man at the dinner table, and he might use every precaution to prevent it. To the dinner a number of guests sat down. The royal Russian naturally supposed that one of those who sat about the board was the expert thief, and to them he directed his attention.

From a city prison one of the most hardened rascals was taken, and told that if he would rob the grand duke he should have his liberty. The thief was dressed as, and acted the part of, a waiter. The liveried servant moved about with all the pomp and grace of a lord. Indeed, he so little resembled the adroit rogue that he was, that his employer began to fear, as the dinner progressed, that he had made an unwise selection.

It was arranged between the master and the thief that when the latter had accomplished his difficult mission he was to indicate it to the former by a sly wink. The wine flowed, the soup, fish, and game, the various entrées and relishes appeared and disappeared, and still no signal of success. Finally the cigars were passed, and as they were being lighted, the thief gave the signal.

The master asked his guest the time of night. The guest, with pleasing confidence, drew his guard and found at the end of it, instead of the watch, a slice of turnip. Then the host asked his guest for some snuff. The box was gone. Inquiry was made for a beautiful ring which the guest had worn. That, too, was absent. His purse had likewise disappeared. But the most astonishing part of the performance was discovered in the fact that not only had the guest of the evening been robbed, but the host, likewise.

PHAROAH'S SERPENTS' EGGS.

To make pharaoh's serpents' eggs, fuse in a crucible equal parts by weight of yellow prussiate of potash and flower of sulphur. Frequently it is advisable, if the heat cannot be well regulated, to include a little carbonate of potash; lixiviate the mass with water, and filter. The filtrate will be sulphocyanide of mercury dissolved in nitric acid; collect this; wash well with water and dry; roll into a small pyramid, cover with tinfoil; when dry it is ready to be lighted.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Stage Driver Quits Dodging Railroads.

"Tim" Taft, of Bisbee, Ariz., has given up dodging railroads and has gone to California to live. Tim drove a stage into Bisbee from Tombstone in 1880, and he had been driving ever since, changing his route frequently as the railroads appeared as competitors and to meet travel demands resulting from the opening of new mine camps. His last route was to Nocazari, Mexico.

Money often was Taft's sole passenger on a trip. The mine owners who lived in Bisbee sent their money for pay rolls to the mines by Taft. Owing to danger of robbery in the days gone by, the owners frequently preferred to remain at home. Taft was robbed a few times, but he evaded or awed the robbers more often. Finally age and railroads drove Tim off the box seat.

Tell of Plot to Fire Big Prison.

Following close upon the rioting in Sing Sing prison, in New York, and the removal of many of the unruly prisoners to Auburn comes a startling revelation of a plot to destroy the prison and liberate 1,400 men. Four convicts told of the plot. Ten alleged ringleaders were immediately locked in dark cells and 300 others were placed indefinitely on a diet of bread and water as a result of the disclosure. Sixty-five of the most desperate of the convicts were removed to Auburn.

A fire was discovered in the cellhouse when Warden Clancy was preparing for the investigation. The smoke was traced to one of the cells, where a quantity of rags had been ignited. The blaze was quickly extinguished. Cocaine and morphine, smuggled in to "dope fiends" in the prison, were largely responsible for the outbreaks.

Risk Lives to Save Dog at Niagara Falls.

Two men risked going over Niagara Falls recently, that they might save a small dog which was clinging to some rocks only a short distance above the cataract.

The animal had been running along the river bank and slipped into the water about 100 feet above the falls. It was quickly swept down the river, but finally managed to get a slight foothold and clung for its life. Park Constables Alexander and Glassbrook went to the rescue. Glassbrook grasped Alexander's hand and waded out. He reached the dog and brought it to shore.

Hurled Through Wind Shield.

William O. Briggs, of Troy, Kan., had a miraculous escape from death when his motor cycle collided with an automobile driven by W. D. Sharp on the Wathena Road. Briggs saw a cloud of dust ahead of him as he reached the top of a hill, but before he realized the danger the automobile shot out of the dust and the two machines crashed. Briggs was thrown head first through the glass wind shield of the car. Several gashes were cut on his face and legs.

Flames Defied by Rooster.

Fire in the Kearney hop works, at Kearny, N. Y., which started just as the employees were leaving at noon, destroyed the $25,000 plant. The flames spread to a row of frame houses in the rear, consuming the home of James Breen.

Throughout the fire a big white rooster sat on the roof crowing and flapping his wings. Efforts were made to dislodge him and the firemen turned a hose in his direction, but the bird continued to crow. Just before the building collapsed a ladder placed near the rooster made him fly to the ground, where, still crowing, he escaped.

Grasshoppers at it Again.

"Train No. 564 delayed forty minutes; stalled by grasshoppers."

That was the report received at the Rock Island station, at Dodge City, Kan., recently. The train was coming out of Ford when it struck a deep cut. The wind had blown dead grasshoppers over the rails and as the engine wheels crushed them the rails became so slippery that the wheels spun round and the train stopped. The train crew turned out with shovels and scooped the grasshoppers from the track and covered the rails with sand before the train could proceed.

Huge Rhubarb in Michigan.

A giant rhubarb plant on the farm of Joseph G. Bertrand, near Houghton, in upper Michigan, is believed by experts to be a new variety. This plant spreads eight feet and has stalks five feet long and five and one-half inches in circumference. The vegetable is just as tender and nutritious as are the stalks of the smaller and more familiar varieties.

Quince trees are having a thrifty growth on the same farm. It has generally been supposed that this valuable fruit tree could not be raised nor could its product be matured in a climate so far north as Lake Superior. However, the Bertrand trees are bearing fruit and demonstrate conclusively that quinces can be grown in the upper peninsula with entire success.

Coyotes Help Him to Find Rich Mine.

Famished coyotes circled his little camp throughout the night, seeking to steal the trifle of bacon that was his sole remaining sustenance. His horse, weakened from lack of food and water, was too weak to resist the attack of the hungry brutes, and he was compelled to beat them off time and again.

No money, no friends to grubstake him, he was about to give up the struggle for fortune. Finally, just at dawn, when the sagebrush denizens had deserted him before the coming of the sun, he packed his scanty belongings and started west—started on the road that netted him a fortune of several hundred thousand dollars.

This is the way "Jack" Yore—"Happy Jack" Yore, owner of half a dozen bonanzas in the Lone Mountain district of Nevada, tells the story of how he found the Rip van Winkle silver mine. Bristling mustache and sombrero and toil-worn fingers make up the picture of the old-time miner, now a power in Nevada mining circles.

"I was bluer than indigo, and I was about all in that morning a year ago," said Yore, who came to San Francisco laden with ore of marvelous grade to submit to the

assayer. "I was hunting the Soldier's Dream, a mine supposed to have been discovered in sixty-three by Captain James Doughty. It was a gold prospect, and it ran 1,200 ounces to the ton, so went the story that I picked up during my lonesome travels about the Nevada Mountains.

"One slab of bacon, no flour and no water was my outfit. I had been unfortunate, and my friends refused to stake me further. Even my horse was a wrack of bones.

"'One more trial,' said I to myself and my plug, Skinny, 'and then, if I fail, I'll go railroading.'

"I lay down about eight o'clock of a beautiful night. The stars came out and they sure twinkled at me. I couldn't go to sleep; my stomach was too empty. Finally I tightened my belt and rolled over. Dozing I was when 'Yap, Yap-it-Yao' went those half-human brutes, the coyotes. They were fierce, and they came within ten feet of me. I shouted and they retreated. That is, they did at first. All night I fought them and they went away at break of day. I took my gun—and led Skinny. We hadn't gone 200 yards until I found it—found the Rip van Winkle Mine, which I since sold for one hundred thousand dollars. There was the ore lying on top of the ground—virgin ore, and tons of it. I thought I had found the Soldier's Dream, but I knew I was a rich man. My financial struggles were over. After that I found a half dozen good mines, and they are paying me enough to allow me ease the rest of my life—ease for myself and niece whom I shall send to a swell boarding school."

Auto for Each Family.

Upper Devil's Hole, a village near Rutherford, W. Va., can boast of having more automobiles in proportion to its inhabitants than any village in the world. There are eighty-one families in the town, and each family owns an automobile. Cars are more common than dogs in the village, and there never has been an auto accident.

Bucket in Well Saves Him.

Alighting head first in a water bucket suspended near the bottom of a well probably saved the life of Lloyd Church, son of a rancher, living near Santa Fe, Kan. While playing around a fifty-foot well, the boy fell into it. He was rescued by his 11-year-old sister, who drew the bucket and the boy to the surface. Church's left arm and shoulder blade were broken.

Back to Cell, for Visiting Mother.

No convict case of recent times has so interested western Iowa as that of Clarence Skaggs, now in the penitentiary at Anamosa, and a determined effort to get him out is being made in at least two counties of Iowa and by his Omaha employer, for whom he worked for nine months under an assumed name.

The State of Iowa is challenging attention by reason of the action of its parole board in sending back to the penitentiary a young man who had violated his parole by going to visit his mother in the adjoining State of Missouri. He was making good, living a square life, proving himself worthy of his parole, when the rigid enforcement of a technical, but wholly unimportant detail placed him again in a cell.

Clarence Skaggs is 27 years of age. He was sentenced to prison for an indeterminate term of one to twenty years, and was later deemed a proper person to receive clemency of the parole board. Less than a year ago he was released from confinement to give him a chance to show what he could do, and to demonstrate ultimately that he was entitled to a full pardon. His parole bound him to remain in Iowa.

Returning to his former home he found that knowledge of his crime constituted a handicap in securing employment, and he came to Omaha to begin life anew. He worked hard, gained promotion, and was fulfilling to the utmost the underlying purpose of his parole—to make of himself a good and useful citizen. But he had crossed the Missouri River.

He violated his parole again. He went to Missouri for a couple of days to visit his mother.

The parole board learned of these transgressions, and turned him back into prison. Skaggs came to Omaha, a total stranger, to give himself a fair chance. He secured employment with the Jay Burns Baking Company. How well he conducted himself is best shown by the fact that Burns went to Des Moines to intercede with the parole board in Skaggs' behalf.

Skaggs was sent up for housebreaking. He served two years and one month, when he was paroled to Shenandoah, Iowa, where he had committed his offense. According to his story, it was impossible for him to make any start there.

Besides the efforts of his friends in Omaha and Pottawattomie County, across the river, there is a movement in Mills County to try to secure his release from the penitentiary. As one man expressed it. "Of course Skaggs violated his parole and thereby did wrong. He ought to be spanked, of course, but it seems criminal to take him away from where he has made good and put him once more behind the prison bars."

Spider Bite Proves Fatal.

William Esseck, of Lancaster, Pa., was bitten by a spider. Blood poisoning set in and has caused his death.

Mrs. John Duwart is suffering with lockjaw. A pet rooster pecked her on the arm and blood poisoning developed. She is being treated at a hospital.

Wireless Talks from Siberia to Alaska.

Direct wireless communication between America and Asia now is an accomplished fact, the United States army signal corps station, at Nome, Alaska, having been in nightly communication for more than a week with the Russian station at Anadyr, Siberia, 500 miles west of Nome.

A message from Baron Kleit, governor of the Siberian province of Kamtchatka, who visited Nome a short time ago, was transmitted, extending congratulations on the establishment of wireless communication between Asia and America. The Russian government operates a chain of four stations between Anadyr and Vladivostock.

Joke on Train Robbers.

The laugh was on the train robbers. So they got mad about it, fired a few pistol shots into the air to convince the snickering engineer and fireman that they were real brigands, despite their poor memories, then mounted horses in waiting and rode into the forest to hide their shame. Meanwhile their dynamite was at the opposite end of the tunnel.

The train holdup itself was one of the regular frontier

order. The climax, however, proved the greatest farce ever enacted in this robber-ridden region of pioneer days.

Three bandits bold laid their plans like veterans. In the tall grass a mile and a half west of Homestake, Mont., they deposited half a wagon load of paraphernalia when no one was looking. There were torpedoes, masks, and automatic pistols in the outfit. Most important of all, there was dynamite—precious stuff, a key that would open any strong box and enrich the men who got in therewith.

Thus equipped, the brigands hid themselves in the darkness and the long grass until the North Coast Limited train on the Northern Pacific track came hurtling eastward, its express safe full of gold. The trio stalked forth toward the rails. Torpedoes were exploded on the tracks at an opportune instant. The explosions stopped the train. When engineer and fireman skipped down the locomotive step to discover whether a bridge was burning, the robbers were right there with pistols. There was nothing for the train crew to do except obey orders.

Within a minute the express car was uncoupled from the rest of the train, and, with the masked bandits aboard the locomotive, was being run through a tunnel. Four hundred feet beyond the tunnel exit the highwayman chief commanded the engineer to "stop here." The order obeyed, the engineer turned to face his "superior officer." By the light of the firebox he saw the bandit was perplexed.

"What's the matter, boss?" he asked.

Ignoring the inqury, the robber chieftain said to his confederates:

"I've forgotten the giant; it's back with the train."

"Tee hee!" twittered the engineer.

"A fine specimen you are!" said the fireman. "We'll go back and get it for you."

"Make 'em run back," said one robber, but his chief objected.

"Everybody in those cars will be waiting with cannon," he said. "The job's off, boys."

So the bootyless trio took to their horses. The train came to Homestake, and the crew told of the holdup.

Find Eggs, Frozen Three Years O. K.

The frozen eggs seized by Federal inspectors three years ago as unfit for food, which have been the subject of much litigation since that time, were released for sale recently at Trenton, N. J., by the State board of health. Members of the board performed the official task of eating foodstuffs made from the eggs and gave the product a clean bill of health.

Rock Boat; Two Drown.

Five Indiana harbor, Ind., youths went rowing on Lake Michigan recently. When 100 yards from shore one started to rock the boat. It filled with water, and all were thrown into the lake. Two were drowned. They were: Godel Braman, aged 17; Alex Katicki, aged 18.

The three other occupants of the boat swam ashore.

Premonition Warns of Death.

The story of a strange premonition that warned Frederick Rainey of his impending death just a few hours before he was killed at Cambridge, Ohio, when a B. & O. train crashed into a suburban car, is being told.

Rainey was engaged to marry Florence Smith during the summer. On his last visit to her home, Rainey asked the girl to wear his diamond ring, saying he believed he was soon to be killed. He was on his way to visit his fiancée when death came.

Wins Bride While Flying in Air.

Harry Christoffersen, an aviator, and Miss Bertha Mack, of Seattle, were married at Seattle recently, Doctor M. A. Matthews officiating. The birdman met Miss Mack during the recent Potlach festival and proposed while making an exhibition flight over the harbor, having the young woman with him as a passenger.

Break Jail "to Avoid Evil."

Robert Zoll and Alvin Mueller, awaiting trial on the charge of robbing a preacher's residence, sawed through the steel wall of their cell, at Macon, Mo., and escaped in the woods. They left this note in their cell:

"DEAR SHERIFF HOLVEY: Best regards to you and your family. As we intend to lead an honest, upright life, we decided that it would be necessary to get away from evil associates in jail. Your friends, BOB AND ALVIN."

Two Killed in Initiation.

Donald A. Kenney and Christopher Gustin were killed by an electric shock at the local hall of the Loyal Order of Moose, at Birmingham, Ala. An initiation was in progress and the shock was a part of the ceremony.

In some way not yet explained Kenney and Gustin received too much current. It was at first thought the two men had fainted and they were hurried to a hospital, where both died shortly afterward.

Saves Choking Leopard.

James Crowley, a keeper in the Central Park menagerie, in New York, entered a leopard's cage just in time to save the animal from choking to death on a bone. Visitors informed Crowley that one of the animals was choking. He found that it was La Touche, which traveled about the country with a show until presented recently to the menagerie. The animal was flinging herself about her cage when Crowley entered. A crowd of spectators watched him.

Crowley followed the animal about, and when she was in a corner flung himself upon her back and encircled her neck with one arm. La Touche struggled for a few moments and then collapsed, her wind shut off. Thrusting his hand between the cat's jaws and down her throat, Crowley drew out a beef bone six inches long.

By this time Head Keeper William Snyder, who had been notified, arrived and entered the cage with Crowley to protect his retreat. There was no need for this. La Touche coughed, then she raised her head and licked Crowley's hands.

Penniless Pair Wheel Baby 250 Miles.

Destitute, exhausted, and almost nervous wrecks, Mr. and Mrs. William Lockhard, of Bangor, Pa., reached New York recently from Boston, after having walked 250 miles, pushing before them a gocart containing their two-year-old baby.

Lockhard said he was induced to leave Bangor for Boston by an employment shark, who told him he would give him a job as teamster there.

He said the man, who gave his name as James, went to

Boston ahead of himself and wife, taking with him the family baggage and retaining the checks. James promised to install their belongings in a flat he would select for the little family.

Lockhard tells a story of hardship almost incredible. As soon as he found that he was imposed upon, he wired to his mother at Bangor, but she being in very poor circumstances, was unable to relieve them. Then he determined to walk back to his home and depend upon the charity of the people along the road.

They tramped about ten miles each day, sleeping by the roadside or in barns. At farmhouses they applied for relief, but, they declared, in most cases they were rudely repulsed. The people, Lockhard said, believed their story was a fairy tale. They lived on one scant meal a day.

"We were even denied milk for the baby at some places," said Mrs. Lockhard. "At one farmhouse just outside of Hartford we asked for a bottle of milk for Irene. The farmer poured it into our bottle. When he found we could not pay for it he said something about working for his own living, and poured it back into his can."

Lockhard said he applied to the Associated Charities, at Hartford, but was refused help because he could not furnish positive proof of his identity. It was suggested that a telegram be sent to Bangor, but Lockhard said he could not pay the tolls, and the association would not.

The couple applied at Salvation Army headquarters in New York. Major David Stitt, the head of the relief department, investigated the case and agreed to help the little party. They were furnished with a change of clothing, a square meal, and transportation to their home.

Indians' Patriotism Wanes.

Angered because orders to stop their annual sun dance came from Washington, 1,000 tribesmen from the Fort Hall Indian farm, ten miles east of Pocatello, Idaho, for a four-day observance of an ancient tribal custom, have drifted back to the reservation, with all patriotism gone from their hearts.

Only diplomacy on the part of tribal leaders prevented a demonstration when the Washington order was received.

Margaret Wilson Fights Fire.

With a high wind blowing sparks from a burning cottage adjoining her hotel at Eaglesmere, Pa., Miss Margaret Wilson, daughter of the president, was forced into a driving rain. The calmest person in an excited throng of summer residents, she led half a dozen girls in salvage work when it seemed necessary to carry goods out of imperiled cottages.

This Boy Blackberry Champion.

Eight gallons of blackberries were picked in five hours by nine-year-old Bertram Harding, son of William Harding, of Cannelton, Ind. As the yield is somewhat scattering on account of drought, this record is believed to hold the youthful championship for southern Indiana for this season.

Aged Pastors Go to School.

Thirteen pastors of churches enrolled in the preachers' short course at the summer school at Columbia, Mo. Rural problems, rural education, and courses of a practical kind devised to acquaint the pastor with some of the latest thoughts in agriculture, are included. The pastors enrolled are gray-haired men, and they came from small towns and from the country. The summer course for preachers is an innovation, the first of its kind ever offered by a State university.

Man and Donkey on Long Walk.

Perhaps the queerest pedestrians who have ever come to Washington were the "pals," B. H. Anderson, the man who lost his bet, and "Jasper," his Democratic donkey. They came to have an audience with President Wilson, which in part pays a political bet made by Anderson before the last election.

Anderson and the donkey are walking from Portland, Ore., to Portland, Maine. In the bet it was designated that the loser was to start March 4, leading the animal emblematic of the victorious party, and must visit the capital of every State through which he passed, also calling at the White House to greet the new president. The walk is to be completed by March 4, 1914. "Jaspar" carries a saddlebag containing provisions, and over this is a banner bearing these words: "From Portland to Portland. The Man Who Lost His Bet. For President, 1916, Theodore Roosevelt." The last sentence was evidently put on as a favor to Anderson, who had bet on Roosevelt.

Big Tree Wrecks Train.

A big tree which was blown across the tracks during a storm, wrecked a fast through train on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, two miles west of Pettibone, Wis., and caused the death of four persons and the fatal injury of one. The engine was tipped over, the main express and baggage cars were thrown off the tracks and piled in a heap.

Girl Swims With Limbs Tied.

With hands and feet bound, Miss Claire Farry, fifteen years old, swam the Willamette River, at Portland, Ore., a distance of about 600 yards.

She did the feat in a little more than fourteen minutes, and outdistanced experienced swimmers in her effort.

Miss Farry was taught swimming just eighteen months ago. With her two hands and arms tied together, she uses them as the snout of a fish, and her hobbled legs as a fish's tail as she darts through the water.

Daubert Does Many Telescope Stunts.

In Jake Daubert the Brooklyn team has the greatest little animated telescope in baseball to-day.

Six feet one inch in height, the first baseman of the Dodgers can, and does, snag many a wild toss, and still manages to keep his foot on the bag, to the general discomfiture of the batsmen trying to get on the initial corner. It takes a mighty wild heave to draw Daubert from the bag.

It is figured that Jake can get a throw nine feet from the bag when the ball comes to the right, stretching his full length, and still hooking the station with his toe.

Having to reach across his body with his gloved hand when a ball is thrown to the left side of the bag, he naturally loses some distance in nailing these heaves, but he can get those that come within eight feet and two or three inches. Of course, if the worst comes to the worst, the Dodger shoves out his left hand, and, although bare, takes

a throw with it, in this way getting the benefit of a nine-foot reach.

When reaching into the diamond for a low heave, Daubert has another telescope stunt to do. Of course, he does not have to stretch quite as far to get a low one, for he can judge his ball and take it on the bound if there is time to wait for it.

Going after a high one is one of the best stunts that Daubert pulls. Naturally, when the ball is thrown a mile or two over his roof, he cannot keep his foot on the bag and get it, but he goes up like an aviator after an altitude record, and the ball has to be ten feet above the ground to get by him safely.

Some admirers of the great first baseman think that he goes a lot higher than this, but a two-foot leap straight up, with the body extended, is some hop, when it is remembered that the athlete has to take it from a standing start, and has not time to prepare for the spring.

An Appendixless Town.

Over 200 of the 2,000 inhabitants of Colebrook, N. H., have undergone operations for appendicitis, and the place has gained the name locally of "the appendixless town." No five towns combined in the White Mountains can show such a record.

The operations continue at the rate of about two a week. Appendix dinners, dances, and divorces are no novelty.

Children Find $4,000.

Children at play discovered a chest of gold containing over $4,000 at the old homestead of Michael Biehr, at Peoria, Ill. The entire sum was in $5, $10, and $20 gold coins. The money will be divided among the heirs of the late Biehr. Relatives are now making a thorough search of the premises.

From Corner Lot to Major League.

During the early spring days of 1912 a young ball tosser applied for admittance to the ball park in Washington, where Clark Griffith, Walt Johnson, Herm Schaefer, and other Nationals were romping about. He was too bashful to speak to anybody, just watched the athletes perform.

The next morning the same kid was on hand. He had read about the great Johnson, Walsh Coombs, Bender, Wood, and other pitchers. He was a pitcher, too. Rather on the lots in Washington he curved 'em for the semipro teams, and as he usually won, he thought he'd like to become acquainted with the big leaguers.

The kid chatted with the members of the Nationals, asked who was manager, and if he could talk to him. "Griffith is manager; he's standing over there!" informed one athlete to the youngster. The kid walked over to Griffith.

"I'm a pitcher. I'd like to toss a few to your hitters," was his opening sentence to Griffith.

"Where do you hail from?" flashed back the Fox.

"Right here. Pitch on Saturdays, and haven't lost a game for a year," returned the youngster.

"Go to the dressing room, put on a suit, and let me take a look at you," answered Griffith.

The youth appeared, went to the hill, and pitched during the batting practice.

The players gave Griff the merry ha-ha. They wanted to know where the boss plucked the novice. When the ball came near the plate usually the sluggers lifted it over the heads of the outfielders.

All the time, though, Griffith was watching this new entrant. He saw that he had a lot of speed and a fast-breaking curve. But the kid was awkward, and didn't have the proper delivery.

As the youngster improved with each day and began to show dazzling speed, he was introduced to his idol, Walter Johnson. Always chummy with aspiring kids, Johnson took an interest in the new acquisition. He showed him how to throw the fast one, the movement with the shoulder, how to curve the one down around the knees and the fast breaker on the inside.

After a few lessons, Griff and the players were surprised. In a few weeks the batters began popping the fast one and hitting easy grounders on the curves.

When it came time to make the first trip Griffith asked his strange tosser how he'd like to make a trip with the team.

"Do you think I can pitch?" was his answer.

"I don't know; I'll try you out," returned the boss.

The Nationals made several trips, and when a game was practically lost the kid got a chance to show himself. Sometimes he got away all right, sometimes he didn't.

The 1912 season was over. The kid had a bunch of experience. This past spring he was a regular member of the team, was along on the practice tour, and watched every move made by his favorite, Johnson.

Finally the kid got a chance to show himself at the start. He won, allowing only a few hits and a run or two. Then it was that Griffith realized he had a wonderful pitcher.

Joe Engel recently beat the Browns 1 to 0, with three scattered hits, showing almost as much stuff as Walter Johnson. Joe Engel is the kid who introduced himself to a major-league ball park in the spring of 1912, and members of the Nationals declared he'll be just as good a pitcher as Walter Johnson.

Further, Joe Engel celebrated his twentieth birthday last April.

Eight Coyotes Slain by Fifteen-year-old Boy.

Ray Ward, of Santa Fe, Kan., has killed another coyote. Ward, who is fifteen years old, is Haskell County's prize coyote slayer. He began making his record a few weeks ago when he chased a coyote down on his cow pony and in a desperate struggle killed it with the thigh bone of a cow, taken from a pile of bones lying near by on the prairie.

Since then he has killed seven of the beasts, chasing each until it was exhausted. The second victim was kicked to death. In the last chase, Ray was armed with a rifle. When the coyote fell exhausted on the prairie, the boy dismounted to shoot it. He was so nervous from the exciting chase he was afraid to trust his unsteady aim, so he clubbed the animal to death with the gunstock.

Bilkers of Taxi Drivers Are Many.

London cabbies and taxi drivers are complaining against a large increase of "bilkers"—people who hire cabs, and, arriving at their destination, ask the driver to "wait a minute or two," and then escape without paying the fare.

The favorite method of the bilkers is to order the driver to take them to one of the fashionable West-end shops

and tell him to wait, meanwhile escaping by walking in one door and out another. To add genuineness to his order to wait the bilker very often leaves a walking stick or umbrella in the cab, asking the driver to care for it until he returns. After waiting for some time the driver realizes that his passenger has decamped, and, upon investigation, the stick or umbrella proves to be of the cheapest sort, never worth the fare for the ride.

Women Jury Convicts Her.

Irregularities were waived with all the finality of a woman's "because" when the first jury of women ever chosen in Illinois tried and convicted another woman recently in Justice George Zieglemey's court, in East St. Louis. Mrs. Blanche Thomas was charged with disturbing the peace of her neighbor, Mrs. Edward McKinney, was found guilty, and fined $5 and costs.

Four of the women jurors, it developed, were under age, and another lived in an adjoining county, but attorneys for both the prosecution and the defense agreed to accept them, nevertheless.

Court officials selected the jury by making a round of the office buildings near the courtroom, and picking out stenographers and other women employees.

Tramps Balk Car Bandits.

An encounter with three tramps on the front platform of a Chicago-bound Lake Shore flyer's baggage car, near Pine Station, Ind., recently prevented three bandits from looting the express safe or robbing the passengers, but resulted in the killing of J. F. Roy, a trainman, and son of a veteran conductor on the road. The bandits had held up Roy on the same platform when the tramps appeared. In the quick pistol play by the robbers that followed, the trainman was shot, whereupon the bandits disappeared. Railroad detectives arrested three suspected men in East Chicago.

The robbers boarded the fast train west of La Porte, Ind. All were masked and armed. They made Roy put up his hands before he had a chance to sound an alarm.

After the bandits fled and the train was stopped, Roy's body was found on the track.

Whales Make Ship Shift its Course.

A school of sixty or more whales in the path of the steamer *Prinz Sigismund* forced the helmsman to veer the vessel quickly and sharply recently off Seagirt, N. J., in order to avoid a collision with the leviathans.

The *Prinz Sigismund* was coming up the coast to New York from South American ports, when the officer of the watch saw, directly ahead in the path of the vessel, a seething mass of black. He threw his wheel over and at the same time signaled the engineer to reverse the engines. The ship answered the helm just in time to avoid running down the whales, which scampered off seaward.

Facts You May Not Know.

More than 11,000 persons are employed in the United States treasury department.

Horses are raised successfully far up in the Yukon territory, where abundance of fine lands is available for pasturing.

The average freight-train load in the United States is, or was in 1910, 380 tons. In England the average is only about 85 or 90 tons—except on the Northeastern Railway. This railway, by introducing American methods, has increased its average train load to nearly 134 tons.

Milk and the yolk of eggs are the only foods which contain all the elements needed to maintain human life.

The Chinese look on every bit of writing and print in Chinese characters as sacred. They would think it a sacrilege to step on written or printed paper, or to use discarded manuscripts or newspapers as wrappers for provisions.

Miss Nellie O'Farrell, of San Francisco, who has gained considerable notice as the first woman wireless operator in the world, has retired from the operator's field. She was married recently.

Ben Franklin performed his kite experiment in a thunderstorm 181 years ago.

Belgium, in 1912, exported $783,044 worth of window glass to the United States.

Emperor William, of Germany, owns fifty palaces and three thousand suits of clothes.

January is the wheat-harvesting month of Australia, New Zealand, Chile, and Argentina.

Parachute Jumper Killed at Seattle.

Francis L. Thayer, aged forty-seven, a parachute jumper, known throughout the West, was drowned recently at Seattle, Wash., while making a parachute descent from aëroplane with Johnny Bryant. At a height of 600 feet he dropped, his parachute spread above him, and the descent began. Almost immediately Thayer broke loose from the parachute, falling into Puget Sound.

Thayer did not rise to the surface after plunging into the water. He had been giving parachute exhibitions twenty-five years. He called Chicago his home.

Repair Ravages of the X Ray.

Wearing the skin of his own abdomen upon his right hand, Doctor Frederick H. Baetjer, of Baltimore, one of the best-known X-ray experts of the country, is recovering from a remarkable operation at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

To save his hand, the four fingers of which were amputated a year ago, following an infection caused by X rays, a piece of skin the shape of the maimed hand was turned back from the abdomen, the injured hand bound tightly to the wound, and the skin laid over it. Then, after a while, the work of severing the ends of the skin attached to the body was begun. It is nearly finished now, and it is believed to-day that Doctor Beatjer's hand will be sound and whole save for the missing fingers.

Deport Leper and Burn Car in Which He Rode.

A foreigner suffering from leprosy arrived in Philadelphia recently from Cleveland in a combination baggage and passenger coach, and was deported to England on the steamship *Dominion*. The leper is Dahab Hassen, nineteen years old. He arrived in Philadelphia on the steamship *Merion* on May 14, 1912, and went to Cleveland, where he secured work.

The railroad company will burn the car in which Hassen came East, and the government will stand the expense.

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